The Tie

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The Tie

by [scorpio_15](http://archiveofourown.org/users/scorpio_15)

Summary

Adam is a local singer with a troubled past and Kris, a department store clerk struggling to change his over compliant and passive ways. When the two meet by chance in the most unlikely of places, neither could have known how much they would end up needing the other. Set in Los Angeles in the year 2009-10.

Notes

**Disclaimer:** This story is fiction and is not intended to be taken as fact. All publicly recognizable people are being used as characters in fiction and the author does not believe these events happened, will happen or should happen. The author is in no way associated with the real people and makes no claim of any sort on their persons.

**Warnings:** There is A LOT of graphic sex in this story and in almost every chapter. The primary reasons are character driven: sex addition, kink exploration, self discovery and sexual healing. Secondary reason is author exploration of writing slash.

**Notes:** On October 9th, 2009 after reading so much Kradam fanfic that my eyes were falling out of my head, I had a sudden inspiration. An image came to my mind of Adam and Kris flirting in a department store, playing with a tie and being rather naughty about it. Not
knowing what on earth I was doing, for I had never written a single word of fiction before, I opened a word doc and started typing. The mere act of doing this seemed to unloose a flood of imagery, dialogue, character voices and scenery and I found that once I’d started writing, I couldn’t stop. With help I figured out how to wrangle LiveJournal and began posting chapters on a regular basis. The story quickly took on a life of its own and before I knew it there were these two rather bossy muses in my head ordering me around. And they never stopped, not until the day that they finally showed me how the story must end.

When I look back at chapter one, I realize how much I’ve learned about writing. I still have a long way to go, but I do think there’s a recognizable difference in skill since I started out. In the process of bringing this over to AO3, I admit that I did some minor editing, but on the whole I left the story as is because it gives me a nice record of what I’ve learned so far.

Never in my wildest imagination did I envision writing such a long and detailed story, nor could I have predicted the effect it had on some of my readers or how it would change me personally. I feel like I have found my calling. I may not be the most talented author out there, but I love writing with all of my heart and soul and I can’t imagine life without it. I’ve poured a lot of myself into The Tie and it has led me on a journey full of hard lessons, unexpected rewards and profound friendships.

To new readers and old, I hope you enjoy this story as much as I enjoyed writing it. May you all find the love of your life.
So tall. He must be at least a head taller than me…is that blue in his hair? No, wait, it’s green…no blue….hmmmm…

“Hey, Kris.”

Oh excellent choice…that tie matches his eyes perfectly…huh, he doesn’t look like the type to wear ties though…

“Kris?”

Oh my god, he’s stroking the tie! Look at those long fingers…up and down, up and down, up and…

“Kriiiiiisss!”

Kris started at the sharp poke in his side. “Wha-- huh?” Looking around, he saw Matt standing there, smirking at him.

“Dude. You were staring.”

Kris felt a little dazed and warm. I should’ve worn a t-shirt today.

“And for god’s sake, get your jaw up off the floor. You can’t just gawp at customers like that,” he said, snickering.

Kris snapped his mouth shut and shook his head a little, trying to get his brain working again. “I was not gawping.” Heat was rising up his chest into his face.

“Uh huh. Do you even know what time it is?”

“Uh…”

“It’s that time of day when I tell Jenny at China Garden how pretty she is and you sulk about your pathetic love life over disgusting little pieces of raw fish.”

Kris picked up a sweater from the pile on the counter and started folding it. “I do not sulk, and leave my sushi alone.” He stole a quick, casual glance toward the tie display. Yessss, he’s still here! “I’m not really hungry right now, maybe a little later.”

Matt snorted. “Fine. Call my line when lover boy leaves the store.”

“…”

“Do you even realize what an awesome friend I am?”

But Kris wasn’t listening, because the gorgeous man was headed right for him. The sweater fell from his hands as his mouth went dry and his breath hitched, softly.
“Go get ‘em, tiger,” Matt chuckled, heading back to the shoe department.

The man kept right on, just a few feet away the counter now, breathtaking eyes trained on Kris’. *Just don’t say anything stupid…please don’t say anything stupid.* The man stopped and leaned his leather clad hip on the counter, eyes never wavering, hands still playing with the tie Kris had been seen him examining. *Stroking. He was stroking it.* He leaned his upper body a few inches closer, his face a mere foot from Kris’ own. “What do you think of this tie?”

“Beautiful,” Kris breathed. *Is that glitter in the corner of his eye?*

The man chuckled quietly, low in his throat, and Kris stumbled back and stuttered, “I mean, um, yes, well, um, it’s a very nice tie, uh, an excellent choice.” *I am an idiot. “What’s the occasion?”*

But the man only grinned, eyes sparkling mischievously. “It is beautiful, isn’t it? And soft.”

*I Soft. I bet that mouth is soft. Oh my god, is that a freckle on his lower lip?*

“But what I really want to know is…is it durable?”

Kris blinked. “Durable?”

“Mm-hmm. You know, could it handle some…strain, without tearing?” He started pulling the silk through a hole he formed with his thumb and index finger, smiling wickedly as he saw Kris’ eyes follow the movement.

Kris tried to think about what kind of strain a tie would have to endure before tearing, but his brain was not cooperating. He stared as the man repeated the action, pulling the tie through his hand again. *Get yourself together. “Um, well, it will certainly stand up to daily wear, if that’s what you mean.”*

“It’s not.” The man parted his mouth and slowly swiped his tongue across his upper lip, eyes smoldering. *Shit. Kris felt his heart absolutely racing, sure that it must be audible. He knew he was panting a little and tried to steady himself, gripping the counter tightly. Right on cue a familiar, laughing voice began playing in his mind, like a song that had been on pause waiting to start up again, telling him to grow a pair and quick. He screwed up his courage. With purpose, he let go of his death hold on the counter, picked up the wide end of the tie and began kneading his thumbs into it, slowly rubbing circles. He threw back an equally heated gaze, pleased to see the man’s eyes widen briefly before becoming dark and heavy with desire. Nerves fading, he took a deep breath and formed his mouth into a smirk. “So, just what are your plans for this tie?”*

“That depends. Maybe you’d like to help me…try it on?” he leered, leaning even further into Kris’ personal space and tilting his head obviously in the direction of the fitting rooms.

Kris’ legs trembled and he slammed his hands down on the counter, the tie still caught in his fingers and his pants starting to feel tight. His flirty confidence was completely gone and he felt helpless and lost in the inexplicable whirlwind that was coursing through him.

And then without a word, the man grabbed the tie from Kris, wrapped it around his neck like a winter scarf and giggled like a child. His eyes were lit up and he smiled, bright and amused.

Kris goggled. But before he had a chance to formulate any kind of response, the man bent right over the counter and pecked him lightly on the cheek, pressed something into his hand and practically skipped away wearing the tie.
What in the name of -- what the hell? Shaking, his body trying to recover from feeling like ten gallons of cold water had just been dumped on him, Kris opened his hand and unfolded a fifty-dollar bill and a small piece of paper with an address on it. He stood, rooted to the spot, and stared at the paper.

“Dude. I’m seriously starving. Can we go to lunch already?”

Kris pressed two fingers to his cheek where the man had kissed it.

“Kris? Man, are you okay? You look --” Matt waved a hand in front of Kris’ face and then spotted the paper. “What is that? Oh my god, you got his phone number didn’t you!” he practically shouted with glee.

As the shock died away, Kris remembered the man’s sunburst smile and he felt warmer somehow, more steady, but he was sure as hell not ready to tell Matt what had happened. “No.” He tried to stuff the paper in his pocket but he was too slow.

“You got his address! Holy… what the hell did you say to him?”

“Nothing.” He opened the cash drawer, dropped the fifty in, and closed it again. “Give me that,” he grumbled, snatching the paper from Matt.

“So, when are you going over there?” Matt actually looked serious.

“Are you kidding me? I don’t even know the guy, hell, the address is probably fake.”

“Kris.”

“What?” He sighed in a resigned sort of way. “Let’s just go eat, okay? Jenny is probably dying to hear how pretty she is by now.”

“Alright man, but I am so not dropping this.”

Matt was too busy with Jenny to bring it up during their lunch break. Kris’ mouth turned up in a small grin. Matt is a really good guy. If I did make an ass out of myself by going to that address, he wouldn’t laugh. He’d just say that guy was a jerk and try to hook me up with someone else, as usual. Kris rolled his eyes, watching Jenny forgive Matt for being late, batting her eyelashes like a teenager instead of a twenty something college student.

Kris worked the chopsticks expertly and reveled in the taste of his favorite sashimi. He wished that his little exchange with the blindingly hot guy had gone differently, wished he’d been more confident and less hopelessly drowning in the man’s presence. Hey, I did try though. It’s not my fault that he’s some sort of freaky Kris magnet. Hell, I would have done anything he wanted in that fitting room. His chair made a screeching sound on the floor as he sat bolt upright. A girl at a table nearby looked at him with concern. I would have. The truth of this stunned him momentarily, but he smiled reassuringly at the girl and tried to relax his body.

Kris couldn’t remember ever behaving in the way he had that morning. He was a man who poured himself into every relationship. He was incredibly attentive to the men he dated, and he never had a problem finding guys who liked his unassuming, submissive nature. Thankfully, he’d been lucky enough to attract guys who, like him, weren’t into one-night stands and cheap hook ups, and he tended to avoid bars and clubs. So why was I ready to risk my job for a quick fling in a dressing room? No one had ever come on to him that blatantly. Attempting to follow Matt’s advice, he had tried to go toe to toe with the guy, but had been utterly unsuccessful. Head now resting in his hand, he groaned.
What Kris really desired seemed to be elusive and improbable. After a series of heart-rending breakups, Kris had begun to think that true love was something that could happen to everyone else but him. Matt had been telling him repeatedly that he needed to loosen up a bit, be impulsive once in a while, build some confidence, and maybe he would find love where he least expected it. In other words, stop whining and grow a pair. Yeah, look where that got me. I'm an emotional mess after two minutes with that guy.

He couldn’t get the man’s face out of his mind. He started thinking about the freckle and wondered why he hadn’t seen more on his face. He must cover them up. Huh. I bet he has freckles everywhere under those clothes, even on his -- okay this is not helping. He stood up and walked over to the trash can. “Come on, Matt, break is up.”

When Kris got home after his evening music theory class, he put the small note on the fridge and used his favorite magnet to hold it up. It was a green ‘K’ he’d stolen from his mama’s fridge back in Arkansas, before he had left for college. It was comforting to have this little piece of home way out here in L.A. He looked at the paper again, studying the handwriting. What kind of guy hands his address out to random people? I could be an ax murderer or something. A small sigh escaped his lips and he went into the living room, sat down on the piano bench and started playing a simple song he’d learned as a child. The address is fake. He was just toying with me. How could a guy like that be interested in me? Am I really interested in him? He huffed. This was why he preferred relationships that build slowly with time. Of course, all he had gotten out of them had been heartache.

He smiled fondly, remembering the way the man had switched from sex incarnate to childlike so fluidly. Sure he had been startled at first, but it really was quite intriguing and…endearing. I wish I knew his name.

“Honey, I’m HOME!”

Kris’ fingers slipped on the keys. “Do you always have to announce your arrival with so much enthusiasm?”

Matt ignored the question, stuck his head around the corner and grinned. “Writing a song about hot tie guy?”

“Tell me again how I got stuck with you for a housemate?”

“I brought pizza.”

“I love you.”

“I know.”

The movie they put in was semi-interesting, a documentary about how high fructose corn syrup ends up in human hair, and Kris was glad to have a distraction from his thoughts about “hot tie guy.” After the film, however, Matt showed every sign of wanting to talk about it again. “Look, I know what you’re going to say, and I appreciate it, really, but--”

Matt cut him off. “Honestly, what’s the worse that could happen?”

“Um let’s see, I could show up and run into a six foot glittery psychopath with a thing for short southern boys.”

“He was just trying to pick you up, man.”
“Yeah, and who does that at Macy’s, huh? Who? I mean, why didn’t he just give me his phone number for crying out loud?”

“He’s…just got his own style. He’s unique.”

“He’s crazy.”

“Listen, maybe it’s not even his address, maybe he wants you to meet him somewhere, you know, somewhere that is not a department store?”

_Huh_. “Okay maybe, but there’s no time or date on the paper! How exactly am I supposed to know when to meet him?”

“No idea. Maybe he’ll come back. Well I’m beat. I almost fell asleep in speech class again. Night, man.”

“Night, Matt.”

**Chapter 2**

For the second time that week, Adam found himself looking at belts that he had absolutely no interest in. Completely boring. Who buys things here anyway? *Oh yeah, well the tie was an exception, an unplanned stroke of genius thank you very much*. He reached his hand back, making sure the tie was still tucked in his pocket, wide end hanging all the way down to his calf. Adam could see ‘hot tie guy’ through the holes in the island-wall-thing displaying the belts, which happened to be taller than him, the very reason he had chosen it as his stake out position. Not that he was hiding; he was just going over his next stage of attack, like a single-minded tiger on a hunt, only friendlier. *Although I do bite, and growl...and I’ve been known to pin down my prey before going in for the kill*. He laughed quietly.

Upon walking into Macy’s two days ago, he had vowed never to set foot in this place again. *Overpriced, dull, pretentious*. He’d had no choice the first time since he had promised to drop something off for his uncle who worked upstairs in the lingerie department. *Ewww*. But on his way down the escalator, oh yes, he’d spotted something much more interesting: perfect, bite-sized, adorable, and sexy as hell. *Delicious*. After watching the guy interact with customers for a few minutes from his spot behind the belt wall, he had faith that his gaydar was telling it right.

He’d made up his mind promptly, scribbling the address of the club on a page of the tiny notebook he carried. Okay, so he had never expected to find such a treat at Macy’s of all places, but hey, *when opportunity presents itself*…

Only it hadn’t turned out the way he’d intended. As soon as he had been within ten feet of the guy, he had stopped abruptly and started perusing the ties. *He looks so sweet, so innocent*. The guy had no idea that Adam was a man-eater, so to speak, and he was just working here, certainly not expecting to be hit on and lured to a club to become Adam’s next meal. He’d surreptitiously watched the man stare at him and he put on a good show with the tie, but felt a long forgotten something stir in his chest. He had pushed it down without thinking. Someone else grabbed the guy’s attention and Adam made a snap decision. He grabbed a fifty from his wallet and ripped out another page from his notebook, hastily writing a different address on it. He had seized the tie before starting toward the counter.
Adam remembered the exchange and his excitement at the man’s sudden boldness. He’d decided then and there that he didn’t care that he was in a fucking department store; he was going to abandon his plan and get him some -- he loved his men a bit feisty. But he was no match for me, really. Adam took pride in the way the guy had looked like he was helplessly coming in his pants after that, knowing that their little romp in the dressing room was going to be totally worth spending time in this crappy place. And then... then shit Adam had... fuck. He’d felt himself actually caring that the guy might get fired for fucking around at work. Shit. But he couldn’t just walk away from such a tasty morsel, and he couldn’t have the man thinking he’d lost his nerve. All in all, he thought he should be congratulated for throwing the morsel off balance while ensnaring him at the same time, hooking his interest, and sticking with the modified plan. You let your guard down though, didn’t you, just for a moment? Whatever. Oh yes, he definitely had ideas for the tie now. Okay, enough reminiscing, time for Act Two.

He strode confidently towards the counter, swinging his hips slightly so that the tie was visible with each step he took. Oh god, he’s so pretty, so damn pretty. Adam licked his lips unconsciously, wanting, wanting. Hot tie guy was wearing a dressy white short-sleeved shirt today that made those dark brown eyes stand out even more. The shirt hugged his chest and arms, revealing muscle definition Adam had not seen the other day. Mmmmmmm.

Adam was thankful that it was a very slow day in the store with no customers in sight. The guy was scanning shirts into the computer. Pausing briefly, he ran a hand through his hair and looked up. He flushed, saw the tie and gaped. After a few wide-eyed seconds, he seemed to wrestle with himself and tried to continue working.

But Adam wasn’t fooled; he saw the guy’s hands shaking. He stopped about two feet from the counter. The man lifted his eyes to Adam’s, trying for all he was worth to match stare for stare. Adam reached back for the tie. He left the skinny end bunched in his back pocket and pulled the length around his side to the front, holding the center at his waist so that the rest of the tie dangled right in front of his crotch. He started to pet the tie with his free hand, and raised an eyebrow. Gotcha, little rabbit.

The little rabbit made a choking sound and pulled at the collar of his shirt. “S...So,” he rasped, “I see the tie is...working out for you.” He moved closer to the counter, and Adam suspected he was trying to hide the growing bulge in his pants.

“I’d like it to work out for you, too,” Adam purred, still rubbing himself through the tie. The other man started breathing heavily in short little bursts and licked his lips. Jesus, those lips! Adam wanted them, now, and it was hard to be patient. He wasn’t used to waiting, but there was something about this guy. He looped the tie around his other side and shoved the slack and the wide end in his back pocket, wearing it like a belt. “Why don’t you tell me your name, gorgeous?” he asked in a husky yet playful voice, placing his elbows on the counter and resting his chin in his hands. He was smiling broadly, a real smile that reached his eyes.

“Kris. It’s Kris.” He took a deep, shuddering breath and reached out a steady hand towards Adam, index finger held up.

Adam felt the finger land gently on his lower lip and he stopped smiling. Fuck. He let his tongue slip out, just enough to wet the tip of the finger. Kris moaned, so quietly that Adam barely heard it, but it sort of knocked the wind out of him. He needed to end this now before he lost control completely and got them both arrested. Plus, he noticed with a jolt, someone was coming toward them. It was the same guy Adam had seen Kris talking to two days ago. Trying to stay unaffected, he reached into his front pocket, pulled out yet another note and set it on the counter.
Kris’ finger pushed down Adam’s lip slightly as he removed it and then he slowly brought it to his own lips, the briefest touch before dropping it down to the folded paper. “Who are you? Who can I say is driving me out of my mind, making me think things, want to do things --”

_Fuck fuck fuckity fuck. Point to little rabbit. I need to move._ He backed up and did a graceful turn, flashing a dazzling smile at Kris as he did so. When he was at least five feet away, he spoke to Kris over his shoulder, “Adam, my name is Adam,” and kept walking.

After he was certain that he was out of Kris’ line of view, Adam quickened his steps until he was out the door. _Christ._ He sat down hard on a cold cement bench near the entrance and tried to compose himself. _What the hell is wrong with me? He’s just another piece of ass, Lambert…get a grip!_ His breathing gradually settled as he let the cool of the bench seep into him, soothing his frayed nerves. He wanted the little rabbit, Kris, he wanted Kris so badly that it was sort of scary, and he did not enjoy feeling out of control like that. _I can do this, I just have to keep my eye on the prize, stay focused. He’s just like any other guy, nothing special about him._ Adam smacked his thighs and stood up, renewed determination set in his features.

Adam went home to his apartment above the club and decided to spend several hours working in his recording studio on the new track. He didn’t have to be down at the club until seven o’clock that evening, and Alisan had been saying for weeks that he needed to lay it down already because it was just that good. After a few minutes he was changed into a faded t-shirt and a pair of loose jeans that were slightly too long when he wasn’t wearing boots. The cuffs of his jeans dragged on the wood floor as he padded barefoot into the small but modern kitchen, then rummaged until he found a package of dried cherries and a bottle of water.

He set himself up in the studio and felt like he was in his own skin again as the notes and words flowed effortlessly, smoothing out any remaining wrinkles of fear from that afternoon. He was calm, collected, doing what he was born to do, in control of his life and where it was heading. About thirty minutes into his recording session, however, Kris’ face appeared unbidden in Adam’s mind. He shoved the vision forcefully away -- _keep your eye on the prize_ -- and it did not return. Adam was pleased with himself.

At five o’clock, Adam began his routine: quick workout, shower, select clothing and get dressed, do makeup and hair. That left him with about five minutes to stock his pockets with supplies and to sit and do some deep breathing while mentally preparing himself for the night to come. On his way out, he stopped where he had hung the tie up on a hook near the door and ran a finger down it, allowing himself to shiver with anticipation. _Tomorrow night is going to be so fucking hot._

***

“Encore! Encore!!!” the crowd screamed wildly. Adam bowed again, openly searching the audience for the likely targets he had noticed during his set. As usual, he ignored the pieces of paper that had been thrown on the stage carrying phone numbers and bids for his attention. Adam had worked at this club four nights a week for over a year, and he had picked up one of those papers only once out of curiosity -- desperation was a serious turn off. _Where is he, that one with the mussed up brown hair… aha!_ Adam spotted him near a doorway at the back of the room, staring up at the stage with a mix of hunger and uncertainty. _Think I’ll save him for last, though._

It was four in the morning when he finally went upstairs to his apartment, two hours later than usual. He had been feeling particularly hungry after seeing Kris that day, and that last guy… _mmmmm, just_
the right combination of sweet and spicy. His clothes were sticking to him everywhere and save for a little smudged eyeliner, his makeup was almost totally gone, having been either licked or sweated off. Adam checked his pockets. None left. He smirked and took the empty bottle of lube out, tossed it in the trash and started peeling his clothes off.

Although he was completely sated, the hot shower felt like a much-needed massage that drained away all soreness and tension from some of the more awkward positions he’d been in that night. As the water beat down on his head and back, he thought about the next day. No work and plenty of time to prepare for his evening with Kris, for he was sure that the little rabbit was thoroughly snared. Normally he used his time off to rest, take care of the necessities of life, and work on his music. But tomorrow… he found that he was getting hard just thinking about it, which was quite a feat given how many times he had come that night. Adam thought his plan was perfect. He was an observant hunter, and he knew that Kris would need a carefully orchestrated combination of reassurance and seduction to make him willingly follow Adam to the club. And then the tie. He started stroking himself in the shower.

Chapter 3

Tomorrow

8pm

Again and again Kris looked at the second note, hanging under the green ‘K’ and right on top of the first. It was five o’clock and he’d been standing there for a solid 20 minutes. He groaned, loudly, feeling overwhelmingly torn. If he was completely honest with himself, Adam kind of scared the crap out of him. Adam radiated serious power and control, and uninhibited lust that just poured off of him in giant tsunami waves that crashed mercilessly over Kris, making him want to choke and swallow huge gulps of it all at the same time. It was maddening, torturous.

The only reason he was seriously considering going tonight was because he had finally decided to look the address up online. I cannot believe that a man like that wants to meet me at a freaking Starbucks of all places. But at least it would be public, safe -- yeah, like being drowned is safe. Kris didn’t trust himself to think clearly around Adam, to pay attention to trivial things like his own personal safety. But despite his usual level-headedness, he was drawn inexplicitly to this man and he could not for life of him understand why.

He had tried to hold his own, tried to face that fierce and unforgiving sun, tried to have some fucking balls! The result? Sunburn and a raging hard on. And yet during both interactions he’d seen something peek out through the seamless self-assurance, a sort of open friendliness and innocent playfulness. Careful there…that might just be a ploy. Shit! Shit! Shit! He heard the front door slam.

“Honey, I’m --”

“Matt!” Kris had never needed his friend more. He hurried out to the living room so fast that Matt’s face quickly changed from his usual, laughing smile to a look of concern.

“Dude. Are you okay, for real?”

“No! Help me Matt, please! I… I found out where the address is… and I, oh shit I don’t know what to do and I am this close to freaking out!”
“Okay, man, alright…just calm down. Come over here and sit down, okay?”

Kris was standing rigidly with his eyes screwed shut, hands gripping his hair and his jaw clenched. Matt walked over, gently led Kris to the couch and made him sit. He put his hand on Kris’ upper back and rubbed slow circles until he felt Kris relax a little. “Wow, this guy is really getting to you, isn’t he? But I mean, you’ve only seen him twice for like, a total of two minutes.”

“I know, Matt, I knooooowwwww. Ugh.”

“Alright, let’s just talk this through, okay?” Kris nodded, looking for all the world like a lost puppy.

“So, he showed up at work twice, teased you and left you messages asking to you to meet him at…”

Kris barked out a mirthless laugh. “Teased? That is the world’s biggest understatement.” More like being hit over the head with sex, if that’s even possible. “And he didn’t ask me, it was…it was like he was telling me, like he knew I would come to --”

“Where? Where is it Kris?”

“Starbucks, Matt. He wants me to meet him at a Starbucks.”

“You are shitting me!”

“Nope.”

“Well what the hell is the problem then? What could go wrong?”

“Ha! A million things! Matt…” Kris didn’t usually confide in Matt on a really personal level, but…

“He scares me a little.” He dropped his head, the heat of shame climbing up his neck. Here it comes, he’s gonna tell me to grow a --

“Hey.” Matt put is arm around Kris again. “Hey now, don’t do that. I mean I can kind of see what you mean about him. I didn’t see him up close or anything, but even from across the room I could tell that he was, well, looking at you like a piece of meat.”

“I want to look at him like that.” Shit. I can’t believe I just said that! Matt was staring at him. “I mean, I mean…he’s so beautiful, so incredibly hot that it fucking hurts and I…I want to…do things…ugh! And also I think he might be like a little kid inside and also really nice maybe and maybe someone I could like but I’m panicking here because maybe he just wants to eat me alive and leave me broken and I’ll be lonely again.” He sucked in a huge gulp of air.

“Whoa dude, tell me how you really feel!” Matt laughed, but kindly. “Alright. Look, you are really attracted to this guy right?”

“Yes!”

“So here’s the plan. Go. Go to the Starbucks…which one is it?”

“Just over on Santa Monica and La Brea.”

“Okay, we know where that is, hell, you could walk there. Here, give me your phone.” Kris got up and grabbed it out of his backpack. “Okay, now I’m putting my number on speed dial, number one, got it? You call me if things get, you know…if you get scared or something. I’ll be there in a flash. I can pretend to be an old friend. You can decide you really want to catch up with me and we can leave together.”
Kris didn’t want to admit how much this idea comforted him. *I’m not a baby.* “Ok, yeah, it’s good Matt, really good. Thank you, I mean it.”

Matt shoved at his shoulder. “Dude, you gotta get ready! It’s like, six pm!”

“Matt!” Kris laughed. He was feeling much better now. *I can do this. I want this.* “I don’t need two hours to get ready…sheesh.”

After eating a mac and cheese dinner with Matt and talking about the latest John Mayer album, Kris went up to shower and change. Half an hour later, he had to concede that maybe he should have left himself a bit more time. He wanted to look…perfect for Adam. The pile of rejected clothes mounted higher and higher -- *why are all my clothes so plain?* -- until he was finally satisfied with a pair of jeans that hugged his ass, a grey t-shirt that stretched across his chest and a black fitted jacket. To the ensemble he added a simple necklace with a music note pendant. He decided against cologne and left his hair a bit messy.

*Should I bring a condom?* He pushed the pile of clothes aside and sat on the edge of his bed. They were going to be at a Starbucks, true, but Kris knew there was a very good chance that they might end up somewhere more private. *Yes, I’m scared and yes, I’m turned on. Do I want him? Fuck yes. Even if it’s a one time thing?* Kris would be out of his element; he wasn’t used to doing this sort of thing. But then he remembered Adam’s eyes and those long fingers. He put one in is wallet. *How cliché. Whatever.*

He started walking at quarter to eight, hands deep in his pockets and head down. He knew exactly where the Starbucks was, had gone there countless times to help get him through all-nighters during finals week last semester. Hell, he even knew who would be working right now. The thought comforted him even more. He would be on familiar ground, close to home. When he arrived, five minutes early, he stopped outside and looked in the window. *Shit, he’s already there.* And then he froze. Adam had seen him. Adam’s face broke into a smile that lit up his whole face. *Oh my god, he is going to be the death of me…and…* The damned tie. Adam was wearing it around his right arm, wrapped around and around from wrist to shoulder. *Why is that so hot?*

The door chimed when he pushed it opened and he glanced around. Yep, Katy was working tonight. She gave him a smile and a little wave, which he returned. There were no other patrons. *Okay.* He rolled his shoulders once, turned to the left and walked toward the table Adam had chosen right by the window. Adam stood up. At the sight of this vision, Kris knew he was in for a rough night.

Adam looked, well, *good enough to eat.* Impossibly tight pants that left nothing at all to the imagination -- *how the hell did he get into those with such a big…* -- a silvery shirt that caught the light, and a black leather jacket. Rings and necklaces accessorized his neck and hands. And that tie, worked right up his leather sleeve. There was blue and green…*oh…* in his inky black hair, which was partially swept down across his forehead in the front and artfully disheveled in the back, somehow looking both natural and flawless at the same time. But it was Adam’s face that was reeling Kris in with its perfect proportions and ice blue eyes to get lost in, eyes rimmed with black eyeliner. Right now that face was open and smiling, beckoning Kris forward, but the air around Adam was absolutely pulsing with want. Kris could feel it, could almost taste it, smell it. The combination of raw lust and friendly smile was intoxicating, assaulting his senses, making him dizzy. But he also felt…sexy, wanted and somehow braver.

Adam motioned for him to sit in the booth. Kris swallowed hard and sat down, mentally shaking himself.

“Thirsty?” Adam asked. Kris studied his face; he looked genuine.
“Yeah, I’ll just, um, get some water.” He started to rise, but Adam held his hand up.

“Allow me.” He stood and walked over to Katy.

Kris watched Adam charm Katy and laugh with her. Feeling a bit disarmed by Adam’s behavior, he relaxed back into the booth and thought that he had been right about him after all. There is a really nice guy in there. He didn’t let his guard down though given that Adam was a still a complete unknown. Not that you’ll have much choice if he turns on the flirt, might as well face it. Stop that, don’t give up before even trying, you moron.

Adam returned with a bottle of water for Kris and java chip frappacino with whipped cream for himself. He sat down.

He’s so graceful, so controlled in his movements.

“Kris,” he began, “I’m really, really happy that you came here tonight.” He started swirling his finger around in the whipped cream. “I know that I came on pretty strong at the store….” Adam put a finger in his mouth and sucked the tip lightly, “…and I don’t regret it.” He touched his moistened finger to Kris’ bottom lip briefly and smiled, playfully reflecting Kris’ action in the store yesterday.

Kris heard a humming noise in his ears. “I…I don’t regret it either and I’m glad to be here, too.”

Adam leaned across the table. “You have no idea how sexy you are, do you?” Kris saw his pupils dilate slightly and thought, here it comes. But Adam just grinned. “How on earth did you end up in LA, sweet thing? Where did you come from?”

Kris supposed his accent gave him away. “Arkansas. I came here to study music.” He was melting into those blue, expanding eyes again when he saw them sharpen with interest. But it was gone as quickly as it came, and Adam belted out a hearty chuckle.

“Arkansas? I knew you must be from somewhere down there,” he said, still laughing.

This isn’t so bad. “What about you, Adam?”

“Oh I’m from here.” He waved a hand in the air, brushing off the question. “Now tell me something about Arkansas.”

“Well it’s certainly not as exciting as LA, I can tell you that.” Kris let himself relax a little bit more. He could still feel the heavy desire surrounding Adam, but it seemed to be in check, for the moment. He wanted to see that spark of interest return, so he reached for his courage. “Not a lot of opportunities for a singer and musician there.” There it is again! Kris was excited. There was a person to go with all the beauty. But the flicker died. This time it was replaced by a look Kris had become familiar with.

“Let me tell you something, Kris.” Kris felt pinned to the back of his seat by that gaze. Oh shit, I am done for. “That first day I saw you, I knew right away that I wanted you, that I had to have you.” The tie was coming off his arm. Adam unwound it slowly, eyes locked on Kris, looking like he was going to crawl right on top of the table. He held one end in each hand and tossed out the middle of the tie. It fell right on the back of Kris’ neck. Adam tugged.

Oh my god, oh my… He felt his head and upper body move involuntarily towards Adam’s waiting mouth, which was now wearing the dirtiest, sexiest leer he had ever seen. Someone help me…wait… no, god no!… someone make him pull me in faster! It seemed to take a lifetime, but finally, finally their lips met and that hot, sweet mouth promptly devoured Kris’. He was achingly, painfully hard in an instant. Kris let go completely; let Adam ravage his tongue, his lips, the inside of his mouth. The
heat was searing.

And then he wanted like he had never wanted before. Something new was desperately fighting to get free. He kissed back as fiercely as he knew how, pushing his tongue inside Adam’s mouth, trying to taste it all, feel it all. He growled, raw instinct taking over, and bit down on Adam’s tongue. He heard Adam’s breath hitch, and then… *holy fucking shit*…there was pressure on his crotch. Firm, repeated pressure. Adam’s foot was stroking his cock with precision over and over and over and Kris was going to come in his pants, right there in Starbucks. His head fell back away from Adam, his mouth open, and he whimpered.

At that sound, Adam abruptly pulled back, let go of the tie and dropped his foot, looking triumphant. Kris was gasping for air and shaking visibly.

“Come with me.”

He grabbed Kris’ hand and pulled him up. Kris let himself be pulled. *I’m drowning, drowning.* He saw Katy’s shocked face as they left the shop. He thought fleetingly of calling Matt, but he wasn’t really scared anymore. He was drunk; happily, giddily drunk on lust and Adam.

Adam led him to the passenger side of a car. Kris didn’t see what kind it was, nor did he care. But he registered the cool on his back as his upper body was pushed into the door. He tried to get his feet under him but couldn’t manage it, because Adam was straddling his legs. One hand gripped Kris’ hair and tilted his head back while the other rubbed his throbbing cock ruthlessly through the denim. Adam breathed into Kris’ mouth. “Just keeping you warm for me.” Kris was on the edge once more when Adam *fucking stopped*…again. *I am not going to survive this.*

Adam opened the door and Kris pretty much fell into the seat. He had no idea where they were going but guessed it would be Adam’s place. Adam got in and started the car. As soon as it was in motion, he reached over with his right hand and squeezed Kris’ left thigh, more than once. Kris looked at him through bleary, dazed eyes. Adam was a predator, a devastating, *I’m-going-to-fuck-you through the floor beast.* Kris wanted it badly. He couldn’t remember ever desiring anyone as much as he craved Adam right now. *To hell with tomorrow.*

The ride was over quickly. Kris managed to get himself out of the car on his own. The first thing he noticed was loud, pounding music. A club. That was all the time he had for thinking though as Adam was on him again in a heartbeat, licking at his neck, biting his collarbone, repeatedly driving his own hard length against Kris’. Moaning and almost crying for release, Kris thrust back. But he was immediately denied for the third time. Adam guided him away from the car toward the door of the club. The sound broke over Kris. There were heavy beats, people, lights, movement everywhere, but all his senses were trained on Adam, who was walking decisively across the room with a more than willing Kris right behind him.

They were in a dark hallway in the back. He heard keys jangling. Adam unlocked the door to a room off to the left, manhandled Kris inside, slammed the door shut and turned the bolt with a heavy click. Kris felt all his breath leave him as Adam crushed him up against the wall. A large hand caught both of his and pinned them to wall above his head. Adam’s face was an inch from his, eyes scorching. “Now. Where were we?”

Kris shuddered violently. *want want want want*

Suddenly, with one deft hand Adam whirled Kris around to face the wall, popped open the button on his jeans, yanked down his zipper, and seized his cock through the cotton briefs. Adam’s skilled hand steadily drove Kris out of his mind. Head lolling forward, he drooled as Adam rocked hard into his ass from behind. He was aware of only one thought before he fell apart.
Chapter 4

He thrust hard against Kris’ ass, pumped his hand once more and watched Kris come undone in his hands. *Mine for tonight anyway…he’s perfect.* Tight ass he couldn’t wait to feel, full bottom lip that would look magnificent around his cock, and a voice like music. Music? *Shit.* Yes, he admitted, there had been some close calls in the coffee shop, and his little rabbit had shown some spunk as expected, but Adam had easily regained control. He was still in charge now and Kris had given himself up. Everything was going exactly as planned. *Mine for the taking.*

He let go of Kris’ hands and turned him back around. *Beautiful. So damn pretty like this, eyes blown, mouth slack with his own spit on his chin.* Adam reached out, threaded his fingers in that soft, brown hair and licked Kris’ chin several times, lapping at his face, then pulled him in closer and kissed him possessively. He clenched his fingers in Kris’ hair and Kris moaned deeply into his mouth.

Then without warning, he pushed on Adam’s shoulders until they broke apart. Reflected in his eyes, Adam saw the heavy want. He was no stranger to that look and had seen it on the faces of countless men who thought they could have him. It gave Adam a heady rush. His engorged cock was leaking freely now and he felt the familiar urge to overpower the man before him, to make him beg for mercy.

Kris was panting, and there was something…something else in his eyes that Adam didn’t recognize or understand. He felt strangely attracted to it. Adam shoved his hand down the front of his pants and drew out the tie, now damp with his pre-come and sweat.

Kris’ eyes went dark; he dropped to the ground and reached for Adam’s buckle. *Ha. Let him try.* Adam trailed the tie around Kris’ shoulders and up under his nose, knowing that the scent would drive him crazy. Kris’ fingers were trembling but he managed to get the belt off. However, he was plainly struggling with Adam’s pants, which seemed to be painted on with literally no way to get them off. He smirked down at Kris. *This is my show, little rabbit.* Adam had never allowed another man to undress him. Besides, he wanted to see Kris. It was always that way. He dropped the tie and crooked a finger; Kris rose up at his command.

“I want to see you,” he whispered into Kris’ ear. “I bet you have the most beautiful cock,” he said, and palmed it once through the sopping wet cotton. Kris’ eyes rolled back and then he squeezed them shut. Chuckling, Adam stepped forward and began stripping him down until he was completely bare save for a pendant hanging around his neck, which Adam now realized was a music note. He shook himself internally and removed the necklace. *Too distracting.* Then he took in every inch Kris’
stunning, compact body, chiseled yet smooth in all the right places, gorgeous cock now pulsing to life again. He let the smallest groan escape his lips. *God I want him so bad.* Then he laid his hands on Kris, touching him everywhere from shoulder to knee but purposefully avoiding his re-hardening member. Adam latched his mouth on one nipple and bit it sharply.

“Fuck!” Kris cried out, and tried to embrace Adam. Adam took a step back, pressed one hand on top of Kris’ head and pushed him down until he was kneeling again. He didn’t resist. *Mine.* Adam’s other hand swiftly found the hidden hook and clasp of his pants and he pushed them down just enough to fully reveal his streaming cock …drip…drip…dr-- Kris caught the precum in his hand, looked up at Adam through his lashes, and licked his palm.

*Shit. He’s feistier than I thought.* Adam’s heart began to race. He watched breathlessly as Kris picked up the tie from the floor, put it around his own neck, and offered up the two ends. *Fucking fuck!* Although he had been with plenty of men who had tried to get the upper hand, Adam never been affected by someone like this. *Well, he’s about to do what I wanted anyway…this is still my game.* He took up the two ends and began to draw them to his body. His dick twitched in anticipation and he saw Kris smirk. At that, Adam almost put a stop to this, but he couldn’t help himself, he wanted that sweet mouth too much.

The tie was obviously a pretense. Adam could barely hold on to it because Kris was a *fucking world-class cocksucker holy mother of god!* He had taken Adam all the way in and down his throat the instant his lips formed around Adam’s length. He hallowed his cheeks and sucked, hard, while working his tongue in a firm, steady circle on the underside again and again… *Christ!… alright keep it together…stay in control, hold on to that fucking tie, don’t you dare let go!* But his legs were starting to tremble. *Fine! Try this on for size!* Still desperately gripping the ends of the tie, knuckles now white, he buried his hands in Kris’ hair and drove himself mercilessly into the man’s fiery mouth.

Kris was taking every thrust hungrily, gulping Adam down, slobbering around him, spit and cum sliding down his chin and neck. Adam had incredible stamina, but when he felt Kris’ hands on his ass, frantically pulling him in like a starving man, he nearly lost it. “Enough!” He stumbled backwards, shaking. *This is getting out of hand, Lambert!* He was angry with himself. This was not the plan. He should not be standing here, shuddering, fucking shaking like a leaf… *I am in control. I own this!*

He gazed around the room, his room, the room he paid for every month. *Ahhhh, yes! That will do nicely.* He looked into Kris’ eyes; they were almost black with naked lust and that incomprehensible something. Kris stood up, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand and started walking towards him. “I want you, Adam, want you more than anything.” His voice was ruined, hoarse and low. It sent shivers down Adam’s spine.

“You want me do you? Are you sure you know what you’re getting in to, little rabbit?” He leered, saw confusion, understanding and then heat flash across Kris’ features in quick succession. Kris walked up to him and sank his teeth hard into the flesh of Adam’s neck right above the collarbone. That did it. No one marked Adam, no one. Adam pushed his body against Kris’ and kept walking, backing him up until he hit the edge of a low but deep desk in the corner of the room that stood right against a boarded up window. After giving Kris a devastating kiss, he hopped up on the desk, quickly knotted the tie around the broken window frame and stared down at Kris.

“Get up here,” he commanded, voice drenched in need.

Kris did. But there was no fear in his eyes, only desire and…*what is that?*

He tied Kris’ hands together close to the window frame. In about thirty seconds, Adam had arranged Kris how he wanted him and jumped back to the floor. He couldn’t suppress an audible moan at the
sight before him and his hand slid down to encircle his cock. Kris’ hands were tied right by the window and Adam had pulled his knees all the way to the edge of the desk. His upper body was suspended, arms and back stretched taught, making a graceful line down to his ass, which was positioned right in front of Adam’s crotch. He slid Kris’ knees even farther apart to lower his ass to the right level.

Kris looked over his shoulder and dared Adam with his eyes. *Fuck the lube, I want to hear him beg.* He leaned down, spread Kris’ cheeks wide and began to lick across his hole with languid strokes of his tongue. Kris’ entire body went rigid and then…

“Oh my god, oh my fucking…Adam!”

*Finally!* Excited, Adam increased his speed and thrust his tongue in deeply, pulled it out and then plundered Kris’ hole again and again until he could see a pool of pre-cum on the desk, feel Kris’ thighs quake and hear incoherent, filthy sounds stream from his lips. And then, “Adam…I need you…” he whimpered.

Adam halted his tongue and pushed his middle finger inside Kris. *So tight.* Kris tried to push himself back onto Adam’s finger but there was no give in the tie. *That’s right, my delicious boy.* Adam growled and fucked his finger into Kris rapidly, only occasionally letting it brush that sensitive node up inside. “Please…please…Adam…” Kris sobbed. *There it is.* Practiced hands whipped out a condom from his back pocket and he was ready in seconds. He lined up, gripped Kris’ hips, and did not hesitate to drive himself deep up to his balls on the first thrust. Kris’ head snapped back and he cried out loudly, then began a series of curses and moans as Adam pounded into him so hard and fast that the desk was banging the wall.

All at once, Adam stopped moving and smiled wickedly. Kris’ breathing was ragged, sweat was pouring off him and every muscle was quivering. His knees slipped apart a few more inches. A long, low whine sounded into the silence. “Please, don’t stop, I’m begging you…please…”

*Yessssssssss!* Adam resumed with a frantic pace, thrusting with every ounce of his strength until he finally felt his balls clenching. Pulling out quickly, he snapped off the condom just in time. With a huge shudder, he reached his peak and sprayed his seed all over Kris’ glistening back. He heard Kris gasp when the cum landed on him.

“Adam!” he screamed, and came so hard that he wrenched his body away from the window and fell back into Adam’s arms as the tie gave way and broke from the strain.

The silence stretched. Both men were trying to catch their breath and did not move for a full two minutes, Adam still holding Kris in his arms. After a while, Kris finally looked up into Adam’s face. What he saw in Kris’ eyes made him stop breathing, for he finally recognized that mysterious something…it was trust. This was so unexpected, so disarming, so confusing, that he truly felt at a loss for the first time in ten years. As far as he knew, Kris had no reason on earth to trust him. His eyes grew as wide as the sky. *Wha-- what…what…* His brain could not comprehend what was happening.

Kris slowly sat up and shifted so that he was sitting on the edge of the desk and hugged Adam gently to his body. Adam stared down at him, feeling rocked to his core. Without thinking, without understanding what the hell he was doing, he lowered his head and kissed Kris with a tenderness he did not know he possessed. Kris kissed him back with equal warmth. Tongues curled around each other, hands caressed through hair and just like that, Adam wished he were in a bed with Kris instead of standing in this cold and unfeeling room.
Bright sunlight was glaring across Adam’s face. *Shit, I forgot to close the blinds last night. Huh, that’s weird, I never forget to do that.* He was warm and comfortable and Kris’ skin felt so nice against his. *Wait a minute...WHAT??* Adam’s eyes snapped open and met a shock of brown hair. They were completely uncovered and naked in the bed. Adam was curled around a smaller man’s body, left leg and arm draped over him, and his morning wood firmly pressed into the man’s back.

**FUCK!** **fuck fuck fuck fuck** **FUCK!** All hardness vanished from his dick at once and he laid there, rigid and panicking, heart pounding madly like it was going to burst right out of his chest. A *man is in my bed. Kris is in my bed. I am cuddling with a man in my bed. This cannot be happening, how did this happen...shit!* And then he remembered: Kissing in the club room, Adam dressing Kris, leading him up to his apartment, hands scrabbling passionately all over each other, then clothes falling away. They had dropped into Adam’s bed and made out until they couldn’t stand it anymore, jerked each other off, then promptly fell asleep.

*How could I have let this happen! I let him into my apartment, my bed, my sanctuary! Oh shit oh shit oh shit!* Adam’s two worlds were colliding with such force that his head felt like it was imploding. Never before had anyone save his closest friends and family been allowed in his apartment, and he had certainly never permitted a man to share his bed or to spend the night. He was afraid to move, afraid to wake Kris.

But I have to get him out of here...oh my god how am I going to do that?

Cautiously, slowly, he lifted his limbs from Kris’ slumbering form and rolled away until he was at the edge of the bed. Silence. Thank god Kris was a sound sleeper. He got up quietly, tiptoed into the bathroom and silently closed the door. His legs gave way and he collapsed on the floor, drew his knees up to his chest and wrapped his arms around himself, trembling and scared all over. He had allowed Kris get past all of the barriers he had so carefully, painstakingly constructed over the last ten years.

*How could I have let this happen? Please let this be a dream. Please let me wake up alone and find everything as it should be...oh god what am I going to do?* Shivering, he sat up. *For fuck’s sake, pull yourself together!* He spotted his robe hanging on the back of the door and hastily got up to put it on. As he did so, he happened to glance in the mirror and saw a bruise just above his collarbone. *Fuck! Okay, okay, calm down...just think Adam, think!* He sat down on the edge of the bathtub and took a few deep, steadying breaths to clear his head. There was no other way around it, he was just going to have to go out there and tell Kris to go home. *Maybe he’s already gone, maybe he woke up and left.* Adam dearly hoped that this would be the case but thought that it was highly unlikely. He prepared himself, pulling his bathrobe tightly and securely around him. He took one last breath and arranged his face into a mask of calm before opening the door and walking back into his bedroom.

On his way he saw a path of clothing littering the floor, Kris’ and his. *Who undressed me?* He racked his brain; this was important. After a moment, he sighed with relief as the memory came back to him. *I did.* The apartment was still completely silent. Either Kris was gone or...*shit, he’s still here, still sleeping, still in my bed...oh god, just look at him!*

Kris was stretched out now, one arm flung over his head, the other clutching something that Adam couldn’t make out. The sheets were scrunched at the bottom of the bed and Kris’ glorious body lay there in full sunlight, a red mark on one nipple and finger-shaped bruises on his hips. Adam’s heart
caught in his throat. *No, no, no…that is a dangerous line to walk. Just get him up and out of here, quick.* “Kris,” he called in a flat voice, “Kris, wake up.”

Kris stirred a bit, and then his eyes fluttered open. He gazed blearily at Adam and then broke into a long, luxurious cat stretch, his eyes wincing just a bit. Adam felt his cock move slightly under the robe. Then he saw what was clutched in Kris’ hand; it was the part of the tie that had been wrapped around his wrists. In the heat of their passion last night, Adam hadn’t noticed that Kris had brought it upstairs. His dick positively leapt at the sight of that fabric and he was helpless to stop it.

Kris looked right at Adam and a wide, heavenly smile lit up his face as he murmured, “Good morning, beautiful.”

Chapter 5

Kris was elated to find himself in Adam’s bed when he opened his eyes. He stretched. *Whoa, I didn’t know I even had muscles there.* He had surprised himself by behaving like a wanton whore last night. *You know you enjoyed every second of it.* He beamed at Adam. “Good morning, beautiful.” Adam looked calm standing there in the doorway to the bedroom, but Kris knew that something was off immediately, and he was suddenly desperate to see a smile on that striking face.

He sat up and held out the piece severed tie, the thin half. “Guess it wasn’t durable enough…um, do you want a refund?” he chuckled. Adam let out a short laugh then instantly clamped his mouth shut, looking angry with himself.

“What is going on here? Why is he gripping his robe so tight? Why is he even wearing a robe?”

“Kris, I need you to leave.” Adam’s voice was toneless, completely devoid of feeling, and it gave Kris the chills. *You knew this would be a possibility, that he wouldn’t want you after the sex, no matter much you hoped it wouldn’t happen like that.* But as he continued to look at Adam, he saw a veritable storm of emotions in those blue eyes, pain, longing, fear, and confusion. Kris wanted to kiss it all away. He stood up, unashamed of his nakedness, and walked across the room. He saw the bruise on Adam’s neck.

“I was hoping to stay for a little while,” he said softly, reaching out to brush his hand across that beautifully freckled cheek. Kris could see them now that the makeup was almost worn off. But his fingers only met air as Adam backed away quickly, his calm façade starting to crack.

“No. No…you can’t, this is my…I mean no one has…I…Kris, just…just go.”

Kris’ jaw fell open in surprise. He was stunned by the lack of self-assuredness he heard; it was completely unexpected and only made him want to comfort Adam more.
“Adam, what’s wrong? Did I do something? I thought… I thought last night was…” After their mind-numbingly hot battle for sexual dominance, Kris was positive he had felt a connection in the tender and passionate exchange that followed. *I know something was there… he must have felt it, too.*

“It was unbelievable.” Adam mumbled to the floor. When he looked up, his eyes were shining. “Please, please Kris… I’m… I’m begging you to -- ” Then in a flash, everything shifted and some kind of wall seemed to slam down over his eyes. “Go. This is how things are, Kris. Almost every night of the week, I have my choice of men, pleading with me to fuck them, just like you did last night. It didn’t mean anything, it never does. Go home.”

A horrible ringing noise was building in Kris’ ears as a silent war took place in his mind. Adam was lying to him at least partially, he was certain of it, but the words still cut him deeper than he cared to admit. *Just leave.* But his desire to stay was so strong, to figure out what was distressing Adam so much, to console him, to learn more about him, to hear him laugh, to bring back those sparks of interest in music. And he wanted to passionately embrace him and feel the giddy rush of going toe to toe with a man like that again. *But you can’t fix this. You don’t even know him, don’t know what you’re getting into. Don’t do this to yourself, it will only bring heartbreak, and you’ve had enough of that to last a lifetime.*

“Okay. Okay, Adam. Just let me get dressed, and I’ll go… but I’m taking this with me… to remember --” He couldn’t finish the sentence and merely held up the hand that still clutched half of the tie. Adam nodded once sharply, arms now crossed. Kris walked into the hallway and started gathering up his clothes from the floor. He put them on in the living room and checked his pocket for his necklace. Adam stood at the far end of the room looking like a magnificently chiseled statue, but staring at him with the same tumult of emotions he’d seen a few minutes ago. With a heavy sigh Kris pulled the necklace out of his pocket and dropped it on a small table near the door. Fiercely squeezing the cloth in his hand, he took one last look at the beautiful, tormented man. “Goodbye, Adam.”

He went outside and tried to get his bearings so he could walk home, but decided to hail a cab instead; it was easier given his emotional state plus he was sore from… *Adam.* He watched the buildings go by and tried not to feel devastated by Adam’s behavior toward him that morning. *It was only one night, one night out of my whole life. I knew the risks and did it anyway.* Regardless, he couldn’t ignore the aching rejection in his heart. He started to play with his half of the tie. *Why did I take that? It’s only going to serve as a reminder of what I can’t have.*

But he knew why he’d done it; he wanted to remember that night for the rest of his life, even if he never saw Adam again. He didn’t know how or exactly when it had happened, but sometime in the throes of their lusty dance, Adam had awoken in him feelings of fierce desire, power and strength he never knew he had. For the last year Matt had been telling him to “grow a pair” but Adam had unwittingly helped him do it in a single night. He felt crushed by Adam and excited about his newfound confidence at the same time.

It was ten-thirty by the time he got home. Thankfully it was Friday, which meant no work and no class that night. He knew Matt was working at the store today and was grateful that he had at least three hours to himself before being barraged by questions. As if to confirm this, he saw a message from Matt on the fridge, right next to the notes from Adam, that said, “Can’t wait to hear all about it!!” He let out a groan, feeling the beginnings of a headache come on and headed for his bedroom.

Unclenching his hand, he put the rumpled, soiled fabric on his bedside table. *I’ll take care of that later.* His clothes were still with his own sweat and cum and smelled like they should be burned instead of washed. Standing naked in the mirror, he examined the marks Adam had left on him and found that he liked seeing them there.
When the hot water finally hit him, he let out a long, low moan that echoed in the shower. As relieved as he was to get clean, he just realized that he was also rinsing away the remnants of Adam’s cum off of his back. Oh my god...that is just… He spread his legs and squatted all the way down to make it easier to reach, to touch himself where Adam’s tongue had been, where Adam’s enormous throbbing cock had pounded into him without pity. He rubbed deliberate circles over his tender hole as pictures from the night before scrolled through his mind. With his other hand he began to stroke his length, slowly at first, enjoying the dual sensations. But then he saw the image of himself, swallowing Adam down and taking every thrust, taking control, and then Adam beginning to come apart with trembling legs. He sped up his hands and shouted as he fell forward onto his knees with the impact of his orgasm.

Ten minutes later he was walking around his bedroom in a pair of plaid pajama bottoms, trying to find an appropriate place for the tie. I’m not going to wash it. After rejecting about ten possibilities, he finally settled on tucking it in a small pocket inside his beat up guitar case.

Kris collapsed on his bed and cast his mind over the last fourteen hours. His heart started to beat faster remembering the insane feelings of want, of passion, of possessiveness he had felt for Adam and the level of confidence he had shown even in submission. After fifteen minutes of reliving memories, he stumbled upon an astounding realization. Suddenly he knew why the majority of his relationships had failed and why he’d suffered so many heartbreaks.

Huh. So that’s why they all left me in the end. Ever since he’d started dating in high school, Kris had been known for his trusting and giving nature. He was the perfect boyfriend, attentive, sacrificing, always thinking of the other man’s needs before his own. He wasn’t just sexually submissive; he was also emotionally subservient. There had been no give and take, only Kris giving everything he had until his boyfriends had grown tired of his doormat-like ways, trying to get him to assert himself, say what he wanted and needed in the bedroom, in the relationship, in life. Shit. Why didn’t I catch on sooner? I could’ve saved myself so much pain.

Still, one night with Adam didn’t mean he could abruptly change his ways. But being with him would be such great practice. He grinned, thinking about the all the ways he could practice showing Adam what he wanted. But he doesn’t want you. It doesn’t matter how much you relish the idea of challenging a powerful, in control man like him. Adam’s lust-filled face was assaulting Kris’ brain, taunting him. This really sucks.

His phone began to vibrate from the pile of last night’s clothing. He really didn’t want to get up just now. Yeah, because I’m so enjoying torturing myself...ugh...fine. It was a text from Matt: off early. bringing home chinese 4 lunch u know u love me. He bit back a laugh, imagining the look on Matt’s face if he told him that he’d been tied up and fucked within an inch of his life last night. Huh, that’s weird. Kris wasn’t sure why, but he had completely trusted Adam last night with his body even after he had pushed him, dared him...bit him...No matter how forceful Adam had been, Kris felt that if he had said stop, Adam would have. Like you would have told him to stop…that was the hottest sex you’ve ever had in your life. He suddenly recalled the look of awe and bewilderment on Adam’s face after they had climaxed. What was that all about?

Chapter 6

For the first time he could ever remember, Adam did not want to go to work that night, even though he knew that the routine and the distraction was probably exactly what he needed. He spent the rest
of the morning and that afternoon trying to erase any traces of Kris from his life. He took a long shower and covered up the bruise, changed the bed, swept the floor...like that's going to help... laundered his clothes and sheets...got to get rid of his scent...he even burned some incense to mask the smell of sex and Kris. In doing all of this, he completely avoided going near the small table next to the door, but threw glances at it every so often. Why did he leave that here, oh god why? Just go get it and throw it away. But he didn’t.

Around two o’clock he felt satisfied that his apartment was Kris-free. Except for that damned necklace. Whatever. He had three hours before he had to start his usual preparations for that night. He knew he needed to stay busy to keep his mind off of Kris, but the effort to do so was exhausting. After thirty minutes of trying to work in his studio with no success, he finally gave in and threw himself on the bed.

Where did I go wrong with him? He laughed bitterly. Everywhere. You went wrong at every turn, Lambert. Where to even start? Oh let’s see, picking up a guy in a department store, huh, yeah, that was really clever, really fucking genius. Taking him out to coffee? Asking personal information about him? Brilliant. God, I’m such an idiot. Let’s see what else? I let him get the upper hand during that fantastic blowjob and then I let him bite me. The more he thought about it, the more he realized just how many exceptions he’d made for Kris. Oh and let’s not forget the biggest one...I fucking let him into my fucking apartment! FUCK! He was so angry with himself.

He laid there, chest heaving with emotion. You liked it. His breath caught in his throat. Oh my god. It was true. It was killing him to admit it, but he’d been completely turned on by the combination of submission, trust and aggression from Kris. Fucking mind-blowing. And that kissing afterwards, passionate, mutual...fucking scary. And he’s a musician. Fucking fuck! I need to call Alisan.

There were many people who knew some things about Adam Lambert, but only one person who knew almost all of them. The club owner was more than happy to rent out an exclusive back room to him, because the 27 year old with a voice like an angel kept the people and the money flowing in. Men in West Hollywood knew that in addition to being a talented singer, Adam never gave head and never bottomed, and he was still the hottest fuck around. They also knew that he was never with the same man more than once and that if you wanted him, you played it his way or not at all.

If you were male, not a family member, not interested in sex and could be considered his peer by virtue of age, then you knew nothing about Adam at all other his singing and hearsay, since the only people he was ever seen socializing with were female or a man known to be his brother.

There were a handful of doctors in LA who’d known Adam as a 17-year-old boy that they had nursed back to physical health. A therapist by the name of Sheila Greer had counseled him through nightmares, flashbacks and severe depression for the better part of two years and understood him to have a kind and trusting nature that had been partially damaged by trauma.

Then there was his family, who knew the Adam before it had happened: loving, funny, creative, smart, childlike, dramatic and deeply faithful to his friends. None of these qualities had changed in Adam; the only difference now was that there were significantly fewer people who were lucky enough to see them. Of course, they all knew about his “issues” with trust and men and had heard rumors about his nights at the club, but they loved him unconditionally and tried to persuade him to date. Of his family only his brother Neil, who occasionally went to the club to see Adam perform, suspected that he was using sex like some kind of drug to feel powerful. Neil didn’t judge.

And Alisan. Alisan was one of the people in his life that he trusted the most and who knew him the best. She had been his friend since middle school, had supported him and defended him. Through all the shitty times in high school and after his trauma, Alisan had never once been anything but the
most loyal and trustworthy friend he’d ever had. He talked to her about everything except the more explicit details of his sexual encounters and felt safer with her than anyone he could think of except his mother.

_Please pick up...please be there..._

“Hey puppy!” Alisan had given him this nickname in 8th grade after he had whined at her for two hours non-stop because he didn’t think that the boy who sat next to him in Math knew he existed.

“Thank god you’re home!” Adam cried, relief clear in his voice.

“I’m not home, I just got to the grocery store. What’s going on? Adam you sound...are you okay hun?”

“I let a man into my bed.” Adam heard her gasp.

“I’ll be right there.”

Fifteen minutes later she was at his door with a huge tub of French Silk ice cream and a box of Kleenex. “What is that?” she asked suspiciously, glancing down at the small table by the door.”

Adam looked at the ground, feeling ashamed of his weakness. _Why didn’t I just throw it away?_ “A necklace?”

“I can see that. It’s his isn’t it? And your apartment is even cleaner than usual,” she said with worry as she walked into the kitchen. She put the ice cream away and turned to look at him. His face was a mass of jumbled emotions. “Oh my god baby, tell me everything.”

They sat on the bed together, leaning side by side against the headboard. Alisan held Adam’s hand and he let his head drop to the side to rest on top of hers.

“I saw him at Macy’s on Monday and --”

“Macy’s! Honey what on earth were you even doing there?”

“I knoooww. But I had to drop off a check from my mom for Uncle Rob. Anyway, I saw him on my way out and…and…”

Alisan just rubbed her thumb over the back of his hand in a reassuring way.

“...and shit Ali, you should have seen him...just standing there fucking folding sweaters and looking all sexy as hell.” Kris’ beautiful face loomed before his eyes and he groaned. “Brown eyes that could drown a man, unbelievably fuckable ass, cute, crooked smile, and that bottom lip…” He shivered, remembering the way Kris’ lips had looked around his cock.

“Go on, tell me what happened.”

And then he told her about the notes and his brilliant plan to get Kris to the club. “Stop looking at me like that, I know it was stupid, I shouldn’t have…I didn’t…” His voice was rising in anger as he mentally kicked himself some more.

“Oh Adam,” she said, sitting up and turning her body to face him. “I’m not judging you, you know that. And it wasn’t stupid to feel attracted to him, to want him. Shit, he probably turned out to be a hell of a lot nicer than the regular idiots who fawn over you at the club. And he had no idea about you, did he?”
“No.” Adam was having a hard time sorting through his emotions. Under his pulsing anger, he was starting to feel bad for manipulating Kris like that. He had felt a touch of that at Macy’s on that first day, but this, this was much worse. It made him feel like more of a shit than usual. The men at the club knew what they were getting into, but Kris…

“Shit, Ali, I messed everything up! I took him to a Starbucks for god’s sake to try to make him feel more relaxed so he would come to the club with me. I…I asked him where he was from and oh my god Ali, he’s a musician! Why did I talk to him at all…why did I even let myself….” He put his head in his hands and mumbled, “fuck.”

Alisan knew that there was never any real talking involved with Adam’s men, knew that it would only tempt him into seeing them as people rather than a fix.

“Adam.” She took his hands away from his head and held them in hers. “Look at me.” She waited until she could see his eyes. “This is a good thing.”

“What! No, no, no Ali, how can this be a good thing! I let him into my bed, I let him fucking mark me!” He snatched his hands away from hers and rubbed viciously at the makeup to show her, to make her understand.

She sighed. “How many times have we been over this? How many times have I said that not everyone is going to hurt you like they did, that it’s okay to --”

“It’s not okay!” he yelled, starting to shake. “Ali, what am I going to do? He made me feel so, so…” Tears started to fall steadily down his anguished face.

“Ssshhhhh, puppy. Come here.” She pulled him down until his head rested in her lap and stroked his hair. His body began to heave and shudder with sobs and he clutched her tightly. “Oh my sweet Adam, it’s okay baby,” she said soothingly.

He hadn’t cried like this in years, not since he had tried to date again after the incident, not since he had put all those walls in place to protect himself. They sat that way for a good ten minutes until Adam’s crying faded away into hiccups and eventually just sniffles. “I got snot all over you,” he said, sitting up and wiping his nose.

She laughed softly and handed him some tissue. “Proof of how much I love you.” His eyes were red and puffy now and for a moment, he looked exactly as he had all those many years ago.

He blew his nose, “God, I’m such a --”

“You are not a baby, Adam, you’re human, and the fact that this is happening is a sign of healing, not weakness.” She looked thoughtful for a moment. “You know, we should probably call Sheila.”

“No, I don’t want to go back to therapy. I just want to erase the last week of my life and have things be like they were.”

“Do you really? Do you really want that to be your life?”

“What’s wrong with my life? I have a great job, a great apartment and I’m two songs away from finishing the album, which, by the way is gonna be sick.”

“Of course it will, because you’re mad talented, and some recording company is going to pick it up and you’ll be a superstar and buy your best friend all the shoes she could ever want.” Adam chuckled weakly. “But honey…what about love? Don’t you want that in your life?
“I…I…well, I love you Ali,” he said, smiling.

“And I love you too, puppy, but the last time I checked I was dickless.”

Adam fell silent, thinking. After a while, he got up and started to pace the room. “He trusted me. The sex, it was…insanely hot and I wanted him so bad…I wasn’t gentle with him.”

“Are you ever?”

“That’s not fair!” he snapped, but Alisan held her ground. “Fine,” he finally relented, “you know I’m not, but this was different, this was…” He came to a stop, ran a hand through his hair and looked at Alisan. “Why would he trust me like that?”

“Because, Adam, you wouldn’t really hurt a fly.”

“But how could he know that, Ali? How? For all he knew I could have been some kind of psycho. Most guys are at least a little scared.” Adam could see it on their faces, mixed in with the intense desire and it always gave him a thrill. But Kris…Kris had excited him beyond his wildest imagination.

“Sweetie, there is only one way to fix –”

“I know what you’re going to say and I’m not doing it.” He stared at her in total disbelief. “How can you even suggest that…look at what happened!”

“Adam, don’t do this.” She got up from the bed and put her hands on his shoulders. “Don’t pass up an opportunity to have a real relationship for once in your life. This could be really, really good for you, and I know you understand that somewhere in that lovely skull of yours.”

She’s right, damn her, why does she always have to be right? “I’m scared, Ali.” He looked exactly like a five year old who had just lost his momma in the store. “What if…what if he doesn’t want me, what if he doesn’t like who I am, what if…what if it all goes wrong and…”

“You’re scared he will hurt you?”

“Not physically, no, but…”

“Oh honey, I know your heart could get broken, but it’s the risk you have to take for the possibility of finding someone special. And there would be something seriously wrong with him if he didn’t like who you are.” She reached up and ruffled his hair. “At least think about it…okay, puppy…okay?”

“Okay. God, you’re so annoying,” he said, rolling his eyes, and hugged her so hard that she struggled to get loose. Grinning mischievously, he pretended to let her go but then dug his fingers into her side and tickled her until she couldn’t breathe.

“Gah! Adam, I swear,” she panted through her laughter, “if you don’t stop I’m throwing away all the ice cream I brought for you!”

“Oh you play dirty!” he laughed, stopped his attack immediately and put on his best puppy face, “Pleeeeeeasssee can I have it now?”

***
Four hours later Adam was on stage in the middle of his set, transformed once again into the calm, collected man everyone here knew him to be. As was his habit, he searched the audience for men who looked like they met his criteria: timid with a bit of spirit. But his eyes kept landing on short men with brown hair, and each time one of them recognized that Adam was considering them, a look of hope crossed their face. He tried to concentrate on doing business as usual, but he was finding it extremely difficult. Ever the performer, however, nobody noticed that anything was out of the ordinary.

When his set was done, he bowed and ignored the papers on the stage as usual. His pace was a bit quicker than normal as he crossed the room. He had seen a man, a brown-eyed, brown-haired man who had been looking at him all night with an intensity that was exhilarating. The man saw him approaching and looked suitably worried and turned on. Adam grabbed his hand without a word and headed to the room in the back. Once inside, Adam started kissing him furiously and was pleased to hear groaning and whimpering in return. He pulled back, smirked, and had just finished undoing the last button on the man’s shirt when he caught sight of the desk in the corner of the room and there, still fastened around the broken window frame, was the other half of the tie.

Shit! I totally forgot that was here! Oh my god. Just looking at it and remembering Kris’ naked body all tied up made his dick throb more than the kissing he had just done. The man before him looked excited, obviously thinking that sudden heat in Adam’s eyes was for him.

“You want me.”

Adam snapped his attention back to the present and transferred his searing, lust-filled eyes to the man who only remotely resembled Kris. “No,” he said, “but I’ll have you.”

The sex was nowhere near as satisfying as it had been with Kris. Adam imagined that it was his feisty little rabbit who was bent nearly double on his back with his feet over his head, crying out Adam’s name. Replacing brown-hair guy’s face with Kris’ made the fucking a little better than usual. When he was done, he led the man out of the room. “Tell them I’m not taking anyone else tonight,” he said, and then locked himself back inside.

He walked to the desk in the corner and jumped up onto it, reached out, and stopped his hand inches from the torn cloth. What am I doing? But he undid the knot and took it down despite his better judgment. He sat down on the desk and let the memories of last night flood his brain as he played with the tie. Already he could feel wetness seeping into the front of his pants; he pushed them off completely and sat on the edge of the desk with his legs hanging down.

The tie felt fantastic on his over-sensitive skin. Thinking about their mutual jerk off session in his bed upstairs, Adam wrapped it around his shaft several times and then moved his hand slowly and repeatedly over the fabric. Kris’ hand, frenzied and attentive at the same time, textured fingers rubbing over the head and slit of his cock…he must play the guitar…his own pre-cum mixed with Kris’ spit in that callused hand, sliding up and down along his length…

Adam tightened his grip and moved his hand faster over the tie. He started to pant, his hand on Kris’ gorgeous cock, squeezing it slightly as he pumped…the feel of smooth skin under his fingers… And then his mind went into overdrive, imagining his lips encircling it, his tongue swirling around it, swallowing it down, Kris’ hot cum sliding down his throat…fuck… “Kris!” The name ripped from his lungs and reverberated around the room. He wiped his hand on his shirt and laid back on the desk, gasping for breath. Whoa. Didn’t expect that last part now, did you?

Time went by, and soon word got out that Adam Lambert had become more selective in his choice of men and would only take one man back to the room per night. No one knew what he did in there by himself afterwards, but people said they could hear him shout out a name sometimes: Kris. Two
weeks and a day after his night with Kris, Adam looked out over the sea of short men with brown hair and brown eyes as he was singing. *Damn it, I have got to do something about this.*

Chapter 7

Click. Click. Click.

“Oh. My. God. I swear if I hear that guitar case being opened one more time, I am going to go bat shit crazy on your ass! What the hell are you doing? Kris?” Matt left the living room and stood in Kris’ bedroom doorway. “Dude, you realize that you are missing THE game?”

It was Saturday afternoon and a minute ago, Kris had been watching one of the most anticipated college football rivalry games of the year.

“I’ll be right back, it’s commercial anyway,” he said, sitting with his back facing the door.

“Uh Kris, I don’t mean to be nosy or anything, but that’s at least six times today that I’ve heard you open that damn case, and your guitar is in the living room.”

Kris had the fabric wrapped around both of his wrists. He thought about ignoring Matt or brushing him off, but…no, *I’m not going to be ashamed of this.* “It’s a…memento from my night with Adam.” Unwinding the tie again, he twisted around to face Matt, hands steadier than he felt inside.

“Whoa! Is that a tie from work? What happened to it? Wait a minute…did you…did he…” Suddenly his eyes bugged out.

*I shouldn’t have shown him…maybe I’m overdoing this confidence thing a bit.*

“Oh jesus, no, I really don’t want to know,” Matt continued, waving his hands in front of his body, now laughing.

Kris relaxed, chuckling, and stuck it back in the pocket. “Don’t worry, your virgin ears are safe.”

Matt looked thoughtfully at him. “Look man, it’s awesome that you finally decided to get your demo heard, but I’d be a really bad friend if I didn’t say that you don’t look as happy as you should be.”

“Are you kidding me? I am totally thrilled about it! You know how long I’ve been working on those songs.” Kris had finally decided to solicit the head of the music department, and he was excited to hear what the guy had to say.

“Yeah, okay, I know that, but…you’ve also been, I don’t know, you just seem different somehow.” Matt looked like he was struggling to find the right thing to say. “I mean, you seem kind of down, but you’re not moping over your raw fish like you usually do.”

Kris puffed out a breath of air. “I miss him, Matt.” *I tried not to.* He had tried to forget those eyes that could shift from lust drawn steel to bright blue sky in an instant, tried not to think of the way Adam’s sex smell had lingered on his skin, but all of his efforts had been in vain. Adam, giggling like a child on the first day they met. Adam, thrusting into his mouth. Adam, staring at him with wide, wide eyes before kissing him tenderly. Adam, making him feel powerful, strong. Adam, Adam, Adam.

“But you told me it was just a hot one night stand, that he kicked you out and, you know, that it was
It’s obviously not all good, is it? He shook his head and his voice grew quiet. “It’s been over two weeks and I can’t stop thinking about him and…well, I’ve decided that I’m not giving up on this.” He got up from the floor, walked past Matt to the living room and sat on the couch.

Matt followed him. “What do you mean by --” he started to say, but just then USC scored a touch down. “YESSSSSS! Haha! Take that! Notre Dame, you are goin’ dooowwnnn!” Kris jumped up too and pumped his fists in the air, whooping and hollering.

It was half time before Matt finished his question. “Kris, what do you mean you aren’t giving up, I mean, what are you going to do about it?”

“Well, I know he lives above the club we were at, so, you know, I’m going to go to find him,” he said with a determined face. “I have to see him again, try to convince him… I just need another few days to work up the guts to do it.

Matt gaped at him. “What the hell has gotten into you lately?”

He shrugged. “Hey, you’re the one always telling me to have some balls. I thought you’d be ecstatic.”

“Yeah, I mean I am, but… just be careful, okay?” Matt looked genuinely worried.

“I can’t believe you of all people are telling me to be careful,” he said laughing, “but thanks for being concerned…mom.”

Matt threw a handful of pretzels at him.

***

On Monday morning Kris went to work thinking that Tuesday would be the day. *I’m going to do it… I can’t stand it anymore.* It was a busy day at the store; people were starting their Christmas shopping already. *It’s only October!* But he was glad because it kept him from looking at the tie racks and thinking about Adam.

The day went by quickly and before he knew it, there was only an hour left before his shift was over. Things were quieting down now and he started thinking about where to catch dinner before his evening class. He was on autopilot, cleaning up his area, and didn’t realize that he had walked over to the ties until he stood before them. He ran a finger down a twin of The Tie.

“Looking to test out another one?”

Kris started and spun around to find Adam standing there with a tiny smile on his face. *Adam!!* His entire body seemed to sigh, as if all of his muscles had been tense for two solid weeks, and his face broke into a ridiculous smile. “I’m game if you are.”

Adam laughed quietly and Kris studied him for a moment. *I don’t believe it, oh my god, he looks… nervous. That cannot be possible. Wow, add this to the growing list of the many sides of Adam.* Kris wanted to know them all. “What are you doing here?”
“Well, since I absolutely hate this place, then it stands to reason that I’m here for you…I mean I’m looking for you, and, well here you are.” He winced and shook his head.

Wow. “I can’t believe you’re here because you kicked me out and I was hurt but I missed you so much that I couldn’t stand it and I was going to go find you tomorrow,” he said, words rushing out in one breath, then he blushed. Way to sound like a twelve-year-old girl.

The surprise on Adam’s face was almost comical, but it was immediately replaced with blazing fire. He stepped right up to Kris so their bodies almost touched. “You were really going to come find me?”

“Y-yes.” It was hard not to melt a little as he felt Adam’s warm breath on his lips. He shifted on his feet, feeling his pants getting uncomfortable. Then he suddenly remembered how Adam had called him a ‘little rabbit.’ He reached out and gently touched Adam’s neck right above his collarbone, wondering if the bruise was still there, hidden under makeup.

Adam sucked in a sharp breath and grabbed Kris’ wrist firmly. The air between them crackled with sexual tension. Adam moved his lips to Kris’ ear and whispered in a devilish voice, “when do you get off?”

“When I’m thinking of you,” Kris replied, completely serious. He groaned because Adam had just licked his ear, and then realized, oh my god, I’m at work!…shit. He stepped a few feet back and looked around. Sure enough, a middle-aged woman was barely concealing her shocked expression at seeing the two men about to pounce on each other in the middle of the store.

Adam saw the lady and chuckled. “Okay seriously, Kris, when are you done working?”

“At four, but I have class tonight,” he said, frowning. “But…can we have dinner together?” It felt weird to ask him to dinner after they had already been so intimate with each other physically.

“I don’t…I’m…oh fuck.” Adam ran his fingers through his hair and squeezed his eyes shut for a moment.

“It’s okay if you don’t want to.” Maybe he only wants me for sex.

“No, I do, it’s just…no, it’s good, it’s fine.”

Kris wasn’t convinced. “You don’t have to feel obligated or anything, you know, just because we had sex,” he said with a bite in his voice.

Adam’s eyes flew open. “Oh god no, Kris, it’s not like that, I swear! It’s just that, well, I don’t usually have dinner with guys or…date, like, at all.” He closed the distance between them again and tentatively took one of Kris’ hands in his.

There is no way that can be true…a guy like him? Men are probably throwing themselves at him all the time! “You can’t be serious.”

“I am. It’s…hard to explain, but…” Kris could tell that this all seemed to be costing Adam a lot of effort. “I want to have dinner with you, really,” he said, gazing intently into Kris’ eyes.

“Okay.” He smiled and gave Adam’s hand a squeeze. Yes yes yes!

“Okay! A date, then, we’re going on a date, yes, okay.” Adam still looked a bit nervous, but there was also a hint of childlike glee in his eyes. “Where are we going?”
“Hmm, do you like sushi?”

“Oh my god, really? I love sushi!”

“Fantastic!” Kris knew he had a dopey smile on his face, but he didn’t care. “Well for a date, I have to do better than mall sushi. I just have to finish up a few things here, okay?”

Adam groaned. “If I have to hang around this place, thank god I have eye candy to look at,” he said and winked.

It was extremely distracting to have such a hot, sexy man staring suggestively at him while he was trying to work, not to mention that Adam kept circling the ties and fondling them every so often.

When they first sat down at a booth in Kris’ favorite sushi restaurant an hour later, he couldn’t help but notice that Adam seemed distinctly uncomfortable, and they shared about a minute of awkward silence until a waitress came and took their order.

“Adam, you really look out of your element, what’s going on?”

“I told you, I don’t normally do this. It’s mostly just…”

“Fucking?”

“Look, can we talk about something else…please?” His eyes were starting to swirl with the same emotions that Kris had seen the morning after their night together.

What is he hiding? “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to push.” In a gesture of apology, he kissed his own finger and then touched it to Adam’s lips.

Adam sucked the finger in at once, but not too far, and began to swirl his tongue around the tip. He closed his eyes in pleasure as if he were remembering the taste of a delicious treat. Kris’ moan was cut short by the arrival of their food. The waitress gave them a roguish wink and left.

“Damn,” Adam complained, “why do we keep getting interrupted by women? So unfair.” He gave a mock pout that made Kris want to leap over the table and suck on that bottom lip. Instead he started in on his salmon sashimi and cursed the world for thinking that college was a good idea.

“So, you’re into music?” He really wanted know, but was just as happy to use conversation as an excuse not to jump on Adam in public.

“How…how did you know that?” Adam asked, looking shocked.

“I could see it in your eyes when I mentioned I was a musician and a singer, that night at Starbucks, and I thought I saw something when you took off my necklace.” I wonder if he still has it.

Adam didn’t take the bait. “I am into music, but I’d rather talk about you. What do you play?”

Kris was starting to think that Adam was deliberately avoiding talking about himself. He hoped to have plenty of time with him in the future to figure out why, but decided not to make an issue of it right now. “Uh, let’s see, piano, guitar, ukulele, viola…”

“Ukulele?” Adam snorted. “And you sing, too?” he asked, looking impressed.

“Yup.” Try not to sound so pleased with yourself, okay?

“Are you any good?”
I hope so.” He began to tell Adam about the songs he’d recorded and the demo he gave to the head of the music department who knew the biz a little.

Adam put down his chopsticks, rested his chin in one hand and listened with a dreamy expression on his face. Kris thought he could probably get high from looking at him.

“Shit, I have to get going.” Kris really, really hated school right now. After having an amicable argument about who should pay, they decided to split the bill. They had just stepped out onto the street when Kris adopted a sly grin and stated, “I want to see you again…and have dessert.”

The innuendo wasn’t lost on Adam. He seized Kris’ hand, walked down the street about twenty feet and turned left into a small, deserted alley. There was an instant battle to see who would pin the other against the brick wall first. Adam won, but only because he was taller and his long limbs seemed to be made for manhandling Kris, who wasn’t complaining in the least.

Their kisses were frenzied; hands all over each other, muffled moans filling the silence of the alley. Kris gasped as he felt Adam bite his lower lip and he returned the favor immediately. At that, Adam dug his long fingers into Kris’ ass and lifted him off the pavement about a foot. He held the backs of Kris’ thighs and began to grind feverishly against him while licking into all the corners of his mouth. Their hard lengths rubbed against each other through layers of cloth, and Kris felt that drowning sensation again. He welcomed his death by Adam and tried to thrust back as much as possible with a giant, lust-drunk man enveloping him. When they couldn’t breathe anymore, Kris rested his forehead on Adam’s shoulder. The only sounds were their grunts as Adam dry humped him rhythmically, focused, clearly on a mission to make Kris come in his pants.

As he got closer, he could not keep his silence and began a steady stream of, “Adam…Adam…Adam!” As the orgasm ripped through him, he lifted his legs and wrapped them fully around Adam’s waist, pulling him in as close as possible and gave an enormous thrust with the last of his energy.

It was enough. Adam’s body went stiff, his face screwed up tight and…”Fuuucckk!”

Bodies trembling, they gripped each other’s faces and resumed kissing, less frantic but just as heated. Feeling inspired and daring, Kris pulled back and grinned wickedly. Then he leaned in again and licked all around Adam’s lips in a single stripe.

“Oh my god…Kris…”

“Screw it! I’ve never missed a class.”

Adam seemed to be unable to stop kissing him. “Your…place…” he said between kisses.

“Have a…house…mate.” He put up a finger in between their mouths. “But I’ll tell him to clear out for the night.”

Adam looked like the devil himself.

Oh my god, he’s gonna eat me alive.

Chapter 8

WHAM! The sound echoed loudly as the door rattled on its hinges from the impact of Adam’s foot.
“Shit…sorry…about your….door.” Adam felt like if he stopped kissing Kris that he might pass out, like those lips were some sort of lifeline sending blood and oxygen throughout his body. Their lips were raw and beginning to chap but he didn’t care. He was practically carrying Kris, who seemed to have lost almost all voluntary movement and was just hanging onto Adam’s neck while being ravaged.

“Bed,” Adam rasped. Kris raised an arm weakly and motioned toward the east corner of the apartment. Adam attempted to half drag him but finally stooped down and picked him up, hands cupping his ass, Kris’ arms and legs loosely wrapped around Adam’s waist and neck. Adam staggered in the direction Kris had indicated, still invading his mouth repeatedly. His brain managed to register only one thought other than must…have…him…now.

Okay, I’m in a man’s apartment, but it’s okay because it’s Kris, and Kris wouldn’t hurt me…he won’t. And that was the last that Adam’s brain had to say on the matter because he had finally found the bedroom.

Kris had a small twin bed that stuck out into the middle of the room from the wall. They fell across it width wise, Kris’ head half way off the side of the bed.

Mouth finally free of Adam’s tongue, Kris began to beg, “hurry, please…Adam, hurry…I can’t…” He was already rutting into the air like a dog in heat.

Adam scabbled madly at Kris’ pants until they were off and then tried to find the clasps on his own. For once his cleverness betrayed him…fucking pants!…and he had to let go of Kris, stand up and strip them off. Adam actually brought his hands to his mouth in awe as he saw Kris bend his knees, dig his feet into the mattress and let his legs fall open slightly to expose his hole. Kris’ cock was dripping all over his stomach and Adam licked his lips looking at it. No, not quite ready for that yet.

“Fucking…get…back…here!” Kris yelled, gasping.

Adam whipped out a condom and some lube from his discarded pants, sheathed himself and pounced on Kris, animal instincts taking over completely. Too much lube had poured out in his haste and he slid into Kris so fast that he pushed him halfway over the side of the bed. Kris shouted and stopped the momentum with his hands, which landed above his head on the floor. His ass was on the bed and his back was arched sharply back. “Don’t stop,” he said in a muffled voice as the blood rushed into his head, “take me like this. Do it, Adam.”

It’s too much beauty… too fucking much…oh my god…

Even Adam’s legendary stamina would be no match for that kind of raw abandon. He spread his knees as far as he could to lower himself almost flat to the bed, wrapped his arms around Kris’ bent legs and plunged once, twice. Kris seemed to forget his position and brought one hand up to wrench at his cock.

“Fuck!” cried Adam.

“Shit!” Kris yelled, and they toppled over the edge and onto the floor, Kris’ cum splattering them both, and landed in a tangled heap of limbs.

Chapter 9
Adam felt Kris reach up... how can he even move right now?... and pull the bedcovers down on top of them. Adam did not do cuddling, not on purpose anyway. That night didn’t count. But he couldn’t have moved even if he’d wanted to. They stayed like that for a few minutes, two heads sticking out of the blue striped comforter.

Kris lifted up a little and kissed him lightly on the cheek. “That was the hottest, most mind-blowing…and seriously unexpected…” He laughed a little and let his head drop back to the floor.

Adam gave him a tiny, sweet smirk. “Fantastic, definitely one of my top two.”

Kris seemed to glow at that. “What was the other one?”

“Our night in the club.” He totally deserves the ego strokes after that little display…and plus it’s true.

He positively beamed at Adam, mouth stretching into a wide, crooked grin.

Adam was getting fidgety. He couldn’t tell whose arm or leg was digging into his back and he didn’t really care, but he was starting to get too warm under the covers and cuddling was... weird... unfamiliar to his brain even if it felt kind of nice. He started to disentangle their legs.

“Can’t we stay like this a little longer?” Kris cooed, “I love feeling you so close to me.”

But Adam continued to shift until he was free, rolled over and stood up. He was still wearing his shirt, thankfully, but otherwise felt very exposed. His pants were on the other side of the bed and he walked over and pulled them on despite how incredibly disgusting they were right now. Kris was looking at him with open wonder, something he'd never seen directed at him from another male his age; want, fear... hatred... but not this.

Then Kris’ brow furrowed. “How come you don’t like being naked? With a body like yours…”

Adam shrugged and started walking around the room, examining the shelves and walls. He trailed a finger over a framed certificate that said ‘Arkansas all-state orchestra.’ That is adorable.

“You are too much, Kris,” he chuckled softly.

Kris snorted and finally got up. He took off his cum stained t-shirt and looked around for his pajama bottoms, eventually finding them draped on the back of his desk chair. He stepped into the flannel pants, picked up the comforter from the floor and smoothed it out on the bed. Sighing contentedly, he flopped down on it with his hands behind his head and watched Adam.

Adam saw Kris staring at him out of the corner of his eye as he continued to peruse the room. “Uh, so when is your roommate coming home?” He saw a clock on the wall; it was only nine o’clock.

“He’s crashing at Nick’s tonight, so…”

Kris was obviously expecting Adam to spend the night. Fuck. Still, there was plenty of time left to work that out, and Adam had other plans at the moment. He’d just spotted Kris’ guitar case in the corner, lid open and leaning against the wall. “Will you play something for me?” he asked, pointing towards the empty case. Adam was still getting used to this... this... hanging out thing and music was definitely familiar, comfortable, something he could focus on.

“Sure!” Kris said, cheeks flushing just a bit, “let me just grab my guitar from the other room.”

The minute he was gone, Adam hurried over to the case. There was something he had recognized at once peeking out of an inside pocket. “Holy mother of--” He keeps it in his guitar case? Why is that so hot? You think everything about him is hot, Lambert.
Kris returned with guitar in hand and saw Adam looking at the tie. He rubbed at the back of his neck with one hand, looking slightly embarrassed.

Adam suddenly wanted him again. In two long strides he was towering over Kris, staring down at him fiercely. “I keep mine around my cock.”

Kris’ breath hitched. “I…I thought you wanted to hear…” Kris stuttered, throwing a quick glance down at Adam’s sizeable bulge. His eyes were gradually dilating into dark pools.

“Oh I do, I definitely do. But, Kris, the things you do to me…you have no idea…I can’t get enough of you.” His fingers brushed the strings on the guitar as he started to take it from Kris, intending to put it down so he could fully access that gorgeous body. But something made him stop. “Don’t pass up an opportunity to have a real relationship for once in your life.” Alisan. Damn her for cockblocking me! She is so going to pay for this.

He sighed. Alright, Lambert, make an effort here to have this be about something more than fucking. He retracted his hands and motioned for Kris to sit on the bed. “Actually, we have the all night for that. I really want to hear you play…and sing.”

“Wha-wh…okay,” Kris said with a wavering voice. “You are going to be the death of me.” He shook his head, sat down and began to tune his guitar. “I swear I’m going to figure you out someday.”

Highly unlikely.

“Okay, this is a song I wrote, well, after a nasty breakup.”

There’s an eclipse in your eye where I used to shine
Every secret untold is a planet aligned
Don’t need prophets or preachers to make sense of the signs
when the buried and hidden can be seen by the blind

Adam was spellbound, and surprisingly glad that he’d decided to hold off, which he couldn’t recall ever doing before. Kris’ voice poured over him, soothing, haunting and utterly mesmerizing. He wanted to bathe in it, wrap himself in it…and the more absorbed he became, the more fire he could feel rolling off of Kris. The expression of desire grew so intense in Kris’ eyes that Adam almost felt the need to look away.

Without warning, Kris threw aside his guitar and rushed at him. He pushed Adam down onto the bed, immediately crawling up to straddle him. Adam was completely caught off guard and went down hard, eyes wide. Kris’ muscular thighs pinned and he began pushing up Adam’s shirt roughly then tried pulling his pants off.

Adam froze, his body rigid from head to toe. Sounds and voices were filling his ears, sounds that didn’t belong to this room, voices that weren’t Kris’. All at once he felt his head explode with pain. Hands… fists…steel toe boots…more than two…he was crying and begging… “STOP PLEASE… NOOOOOO! I’M BEGGING Y --” He couldn’t breathe… gagging… retching…gagging…clothes torn to shreds…naked…exposed…legs kicking wildly… fighting… kicking…WHAM!… sand and
blood in his eyes…screaming screaming…flesh ripping…again, again, again…red thighs… “HELP ME PLEASE SOMEONE HELP ME!”

“Adam!…Adam!”

He kicked and thrashed, fighting for his life.

“ADAM!”

His eyes flew open. Someone was sitting on him, holding him down. He wrenched his knee up and drove it hard into the man’s groin.

Kris let go of Adam’s shoulders and rolled off the bed, crying out in agony.

Adam leapt off the bed, panic gripping his heart, his eyes bulged out in terror. He turned around and ran, right into the frame of the doorway. His head hit the hard edge and he went down instantly.

Kris crawled over to him, eyes still watering in pain. “Adam…oh my god are you okay? What happened?”

Adam sat up and scrambled back into a corner, looking wild, confused and vulnerable like someone was about to attack him.

“Hey…hey…ssshhh it’s okay. I’m not going to hurt you…Adam, look at me.” Kris was crouched low and kept his distance. “It’s…it’s okay…ssshhhhh…”

“Kris?” That’s Kris. You’re in Kris’ bedroom. You were on the bed but you’re okay. You’re not naked or badly hurt. You hit your head on the door. Kris didn’t hurt you. Slowly, his eyes lost their terrified expression, but his heart was still racing.

“Yes, Adam, it’s Kris. Are…are you okay? You had some sort of fit back there.”

Adam heard the genuine concern in his voice. As his fear abated a little, a terrible, merciless, overwhelming ocean of shame crashed over him. He stood up, fastened his pants and walked out of the bedroom without a word.

“Adam, wait!” Kris yelled after him. “Where are you going? Please…come back!”

But Adam kept going all the way to the apartment door; then he opened it and left.

He walked right past his car without seeing it. Got to find Ali…got to find her…where is she? Your phone. Get your phone, you have to call her. He pulled out his phone and pushed ‘1’.

“Hey puppy! How did it go?”

“Help me.” His voice was small and sounded like that of a frightened baby animal.

“Where are you?” There were very few things that made Adam ask for help like that.

“I…I don’t know. I just left his apartment…I…” He was still trembling all over.

“Adam, listen to me. I need you to look around you, okay? What do you see?”

“A park…and a sign…it says Rosewood Park,” he said, still walking, not stopping. Keep moving, got to keep moving.
“Okay, I’m coming to get you. Adam, I want you to stop and sit down by the entrance to the park so I can find you. Adam, are you listening?”

“I have to keep moving.”

“No baby, please, I’m coming for you, but you need to sit down. I can’t find you if you keep moving.”

“Okay. Okay, Ali…I found a bench.”

“Good. Stay there. Don’t go anywhere. I’m coming, puppy.”

“Hurry.”

Alisan hung up and he sat there, shivering under the harsh glare of the streetlamp hanging over the park gate.

This is what happens when you make exceptions for someone…this never would have happened if I didn’t let him get under my skin, if I didn’t… Adam felt tortured. He couldn’t help how much he wanted to be with Kris, how incredible he was, how beautiful. I hurt him…I fucking hurt him and probably freaked him out so badly…he’s never going to want to see me again…

Maybe that was good though. This can’t happen again…this can never… Adam remembered the flashbacks he used to have after the incident and how much worse they were when he had tried to date again. He knows I’m weak now, knows I’m not what he thought I was…he’ll never want me again. He told himself that it didn’t matter because it was for the best anyway.

But he couldn’t stop the tears that started to leak from his eyes, thinking that he might never see that crooked smile again. Look at you…pathetic, weak…sniffling like a baby…who would want you anyway?

A car stopped on the street in front of him and Alisan came hurrying over to him. “Adam! Thank god you’re okay! Come on baby, get in the car. I’m taking you home.”

He suddenly remembered that he had driven to Kris’ house. “My car, I…I left it at Kris’ apartment.”

“Don’t worry about that right now, we’ll deal with it later. You’re in no shape to drive anyway.” She steered him to the passenger side of her car and opened the door for him. “What happened to your forehead?”

“Hit it on a door,” he mumbled and got in.

Once they were both inside, Alisan turned to him and asked softly, “Did you have a flashback?”

Adam nodded. He wasn’t scared anymore, but the shame of what had happened was suffocating.

“It’s going to be okay, honey, it’s going to be all right. We’re going to my place and I’m going to take care of you…okay?”

They rode in relative silence until they reached Alisan’s apartment. She took his hand and they walked together up the stairs and into Adam’s second home. She went right to her bedroom and came out with a sweatshirt and a pair of sweatpants that Adam liked to keep there for when he slept over. “Go take a shower and change, sweetie, go on. I’ll be right here when you’re done.”

Adam went into her bathroom and closed the door. He purposely avoided looking at himself in the
mirror as he undressed and stepped into the tub. As he washed, the events of the evening rolled over him, and suddenly it was too much. The memories of what they’d done to him all those years ago, the shame he felt, the look of concern on Kris’ face…it all came flooding back and he began to weep openly, standing under the hot water, body shaking and heaving.

The bathroom door opened and Alisan came in. “Oh my sweet puppy,” she said with tears glistening in her eyes. She drew back the shower curtain and pulled him out, wrapped him in a huge fluffy towel and hugged him close to her body as he sobbed.

“He’ll never want to see me again, Ali,” he wailed.

“Sshhhh, honey, you don’t know that.” She dried him off and helped him put on the sweatpants and shirt.

She led him over to her bed, gently guided him down onto his side and spooned around him the best that she could. “Tell me what happened.”

Adam took a deep, shuddering breath and tried to steady his voice. He told her about going to Macy’s again, about the “date” and the alley, about going to Kris’ apartment and hearing him sing. But when he got to the part where Kris had pinned him down on the bed, he stuttered to a halt.

“Did he hurt you, Adam?”

“No, he…he wanted me…he just wanted me really bad.” He pulled Alisan’s arms around him tighter. “But when he started tearing at my clothes like that…” He tucked his chin into his chest and fell silent. Neither of them spoke for a few minutes. “Ali, I think I really freaked him out.”

“Try to remember, think hard…what happened after your flashback?”

But the memories were right there; he didn’t need to make any effort remember them. “I…I kneed him in the balls, hard…I didn’t know it was him at first. And then I jumped off of the bed and ran into the doorway. I fell…I was still really scared,” he said, feeling his heart speed up a little thinking about it again.

“And what did Kris do? Was he angry with you, upset?”

“He was upset, but like he was worried about me, not mad. And then I realized what had happened and I left.”

“Did he say anything to you?”

Adam had to think hard for this one. He knew that Kris had been yelling something…*what was it?* And then he remembered. “He said, ‘come back.’”

Alisan didn’t say anything; just let those words hang in the air. After a while of laying in the silence, Adam finally felt his exhausted body relax and he fell asleep in her arms.
Chapter 10

“Please...come back!” Kris yelled after Adam. He heard the front door slam and tried to get up, but the pain in his groin was still excruciating. He forced himself to stand, put his hands on his knees and took some deep breaths. After he could take a few steps without wincing, he made his way into the living room. *What the fuck!* It seemed that Adam had suffered some kind of seizure and Kris was extremely worried about him. *Why did he look so scared, like I was hurting him?* He tried to think if he’d done anything to make Adam afraid of him. *Well, you did pounce on him pretty ruthlessly.* But why would that scare him? Adam was obviously in favor of rough, passionate sex. He shook his head, utterly bewildered.

He walked outside, saw Adam’s car parked on the street and rushed over to it as quickly as he could, but no one was inside. Looking around the dark, empty streets, Kris knew Adam was probably far enough away by now that he couldn’t catch him on foot. *Why didn’t he drive?* This made absolutely no sense and only increased Kris’ feeling of panic. He ran back in for his keys, got in his car and drove up and down the streets looking for Adam. *There is no way he would’ve walked home and even if he did, he wouldn’t be there yet. Oh my god, what happened to him?* His eyes were starting to sparkle with tears.

After an hour of searching, he sped up and took off for Adam’s apartment. *Please let him be there.* He finally found the club after taking a few wrong turns. It was still crowded despite it being a Monday night; he had to park two blocks away and then half ran, half walked to the club. Heart racing, he took the steps two at a time. He was wheezing by the time he finally reached Adam’s floor and tried to catch his breath while knocking on the door. “Adam!” he called, panting, “please open up if you’re there...please!” There was no response. He hammered at the door again. “I’m not mad at you. I know you didn’t mean to hurt me and I don’t care if I can’t have children now....Adam please!” he cried, “I just want to know if you’re okay, I need to know that you’re okay!”

The heavy beats from the club below were the only sounds Kris could hear. He pressed his ear against the door for a minute, and then finally admitted defeat. Exhausted, he went downstairs. When he reached the first floor, he was suddenly struck with the idea that Adam might be in the club somewhere. He obviously spent a lot of time there if he had keys to a back room. *I wonder if he works there.* Even though it was highly unlikely that Adam would be working right now, he needed to look anyway, just to be sure.

It was insanely crowded in the club. Kris wove in and out of the mass of bodies and even went back to the room they had been in, searching for any sign of Adam. No sounds came from the locked room and after about thirty minutes of looking everywhere, he gave up. *Why didn’t I get his phone number? Shit.* His face grew hard and determined as he drove home. *I’m going back there every night until I find him.*

Adam’s car was still parked outside Kris’ apartment building. *Where did he go?* Kris felt like a wreck. He was so confused and worried, tired from running all over town and his balls still felt like Adam’s knee had been made of lead. *You were hoping to have a hot, sweet night with him and instead you got this. Is he really worth it?*

He flipped on the lights and dropped his keys in a bowl by the door. Standing there in the small foyer, he thought about how his life had changed in the short time since he met Adam. The attraction he felt towards him was intense, not doubt, but there was more to it than that. For as long as he could
remember, Kris had been a passenger in his relationships but never a driving force, always meekly accepting whatever happened to him like a leaf floating downstream. Although he wasn’t sure it was entirely accurate to say that he had a ‘relationship’ with Adam, he knew with a certainty that Adam had changed him forever and that there was no going back. But you can use what you’ve learned with other men now. It doesn’t have to be Adam.

“Yes it does!” he yelled out to the empty room, fists clenched at his side. Whoa. Down boy. He didn’t care. He didn’t care what Adam was hiding, he didn’t care that Adam had kicked him out of his apartment, had flipped out on him and kneed him in the balls. He. Wanted. Adam. And god damn it, he was not going down without a really good fight. “So there!” he told the room.

He had a fitful night. In addition to being worried about Adam, his sleep had been constantly interrupted by dreams of Adam yelling that he never wanted to see Kris again because Kris had hurt him so badly. When his alarm went off at seven, he seriously considered calling out sick from work, not just because he was tired, but he also couldn’t stand the thought of working while still not knowing where Adam was. He’s probably fine, at home asleep in his bed...but...but what if he’s not? What if he is in a hospital somewhere? He tried not to think about that. He briefly thought of checking local hospitals but suddenly realized that he didn’t even know Adam’s last name. Shit! You need to stop this. Go to work, you need the distraction. He finally decided he would call the store and say he’d be late this morning so he could go by Adam’s first.

Adam’s car was still parked out in front. Where is he and why doesn't he need his car anymore?

Since the club was closed at this early hour, it was easy to listen at Adam’s door for any sounds of movement. He banged on it for ten minutes; Adam was either a very sound sleeper, ignoring him, or not home. If he’s not at home this early...UGH...stop it, you barely even know him, he could be staying with relatives for all you know...this doesn’t mean that he’s in trouble. If he were home, why would he ignore me? He thought again about his dreams and felt tortured that he might have done something to hurt Adam. Just go to work and come back later. Thank god he didn’t have school tonight.

Matt came into work at eleven, looking way too cheerful for Kris’ liking. Crap, he’s going to ask, of course he is.

“Whoa, you look like shit.”

“Good morning to you, too,” Kris muttered.

“What, did you guys pull an…all nighter?” he said cheekily, but then looked closer at Kris. “Jesus, Kris, you look like somebody died. What the hell happened last night?”

Kris found that he really didn’t want to talk about it…at all. He was too tired, too worried and confused and he had no energy to try to explain things to Matt. Hell, he wasn’t even sure what he’d tell him anyway. “Matt, I’m really sorry, man, but I just don’t want to talk about it, okay?”

“Hey, no problem. I won’t pry or anything, but let me know if you change your mind.” He looked concerned, but he smiled gently and headed off to start his shift.

Kris checked the clock for what felt like a hundred times that day. It was agonizing, and he was so overly grateful when he had customers to distract himself that he must have appeared slightly manic in his enthusiasm to help them, to keep them talking.

4pm. Finally! He ran by the shoe department and yelled a quick “see ya later” to Matt on his way out.
He went through the same routine as he had last night, banging on Adam’s door, searching the club…no Adam. Growling, he pounded his fists on a nearby wall, angry tears filling his bloodshot eyes. It was still early enough that the sound echoed in the half empty room, and the bartender in the corner gave him a peculiar glance. *Oh my god! Why didn’t I think to ask around?* Mentally kicking himself for his stupidity, he hurried over and approached the bar.

“Hey man, do you know a guy named Adam that might work here?”

The bartender looked at him incredulously. “Are you fucking serious?”

*Well that’s a strange response.* “Yes! Does he work here?”

“Where the fuck have you been for the past year?”

“Look,” Kris said, thoroughly irritated now, “I’ve been trying to find him, okay, so he definitely works here?”

“Uh, yeah, like four times a week,” he said in a tone that made it clear he thought Kris was an idiot, “but you’re a day early. Come back tomorrow around eight.” The bartender scoffed. “You look like exactly his type, too, so your chances should be pretty good.

*My chances at what? What kind of work does Adam do here anyway?* But before he could ask either of these questions, the bartender disappeared through a door behind the bar. *What the hell…my chances?* Although he was extremely relieved to know that he might finally be able to see Adam as soon as tomorrow, Kris felt plagued by the bartender’s comment and it only added to his already strung out nerves. Plus, he just remembered that he had class tomorrow until nine o’clock and he was supposed to get back his demo so he couldn’t miss it. *FUCK.*

The only way he could get through the rest of the evening was by convincing Matt to do a Back to The Future marathon. *Wish I had a time machine.* Then he could transport himself to tomorrow night. The not knowing, the waiting was the worst part of it all; it gave him too much time to ruminate on questions he had no answers to.

He was just starting to doze off when Matt spoke up. “Kris?”

“Yeah?” he mumbled.

“I’m kind of worried about you,” Matt said, pausing the movie.

Kris sat up and ran his fingers through his hair. He had to tell him something. “Alright listen, last night went really well until Adam had some kind of fit and ran off --”

“A fit?”

“-- and I’ve been looking for him ever since and tonight I found out that he works at the club we were at weeks ago and that he’s supposed to be working tomorrow.” He flopped back against the couch, totally worn out but knowing he was in for another sleepless night.

“Um…so what do you mean, he had a fit?”

“I don’t know, Matt! He went all rigid and then started thrashing around and then took off.” He drew a deep breath. It wasn’t Matt’s fault, he was just so tired and emotionally overwrought. “I’m sorry…I’ve just been really worried about him and I barely slept last night.”

“Are you sure he’s worth all this?”
Kris sat up again and turned to look directly at Matt. “Without a doubt.”

***

The next day Kris pounded back 5-hour energy drinks like they were water. He wasn’t technically supposed to have food or drinks at his counter at work, but he didn’t care and he wouldn’t have made it any other way. There were huge dark circles under his eyes and his only consolation was that finally, finally he was going to see Adam tonight. Please let him be there. He just prayed that Adam worked all night and would still be there when he got out of school.

Music theory was the only class he was taking this semester, and he was on track to graduate in the Spring. He usually enjoyed it, and even though he was supposed get his demo tonight with notes from the head of the department, all Kris could think about was seeing Adam in a few hours.

“Kris,” the professor called after class was over. “Here’s your demo back from Professor Jenkins. He said it was excellent, but you can read about it yourself in his notes.”

“Thanks!” he said, taking the CD and envelope and shoving them hastily in his bag. He took off without another word. Please let him be there.

The street was packed with cars again, even more than there had been on Monday. After circling impatiently and banging his fists on the steering wheel every so often for fifteen minutes, he finally broke down and parked in a nearby garage that charged twenty dollars for the evening.

The club was eerily devoid of thumping rhythms when he approached it, but he could hear the muffled sounds of cheering. He got his hand stamped and walked in just in time to hear a man’s voice reverberating throughout the room.

“Thank you, thank you! For my last song tonight…”

Adam! Relief flooded Kris’ veins, his hands began to tremble and he stopped listening to what Adam was saying into the microphone. He almost started running toward the stage when he stopped and stood, frozen, against a wall that was cast in shadows. The most amazing sound he had ever heard in his life was coming out of Adam’s mouth. The song was upbeat and catchy, rock fused with pop and some electronic beats and Adam’s voice was…perfect. His range was ridiculous…who hits notes like that?…and there was a clean yet soulful sound to his voice that made Kris shiver right down to his core. Why didn’t he tell me?

He was so lost in Adam’s singing that he wasn’t paying attention to anyone around him, so when two guys started talking only two feet away, he was only half listening.

“Who do you think he’ll pick tonight?” said one of the men.

“Pssht, don’t get your hopes up, you’re too tall,” said the other.

“Yeah, but I have brown eyes and yours are blue…no way Adam will pick you,” countered the taller man.

Kris whipped his head around and stared at them. They caught his movement and then looked him up and down.
“Shit. We’re both done for with that guy in the running,” said the short man with blue eyes.

*Oh my god…what the hell is going on?* He remembered the bartender’s comment that he was exactly Adam’s type and began really looking around the room for the first time. Brown hair, brown eyes, short stature…they were everywhere he looked, and some of them were walking up to the stage and tossing little pieces of paper on it. *Wh-what…*

“Adam Lambert, ladies and gentlemen!” The crowd went wild and Adam took a few bows. *Lambert, his last name is Lambert.* Kris saw Adam leave the stage and started pushing his way through the masses of men. Adam made a beeline for a man close to the stage, took his hand and walked quickly towards the back of the club.

“Adam!” Kris yelled out, but his voice was drowned out by all the other men screaming the same name. The bodies pressed against him as he tried to muscle through them, now frantic to get at Adam, who hadn’t noticed him from the other side of the room. He saw Adam and the other man…*he looks just like me…*disappear into the back hallway and started to panic; he did not like where this was going.

After five minutes he had made no progress, so he turned around and headed to the side of the room, where he did better scooting along the walls. At long last he was at the hallway. There were a couple of rooms back there, but Kris remembered exactly which one it had been and he knew in his gut that Adam was in there with the Kris look-a-like. Sure enough, he heard the unmistakable sounds of sex as he drew near the door.

“Adam! Adam! Oh god…yes!” Kris’ body fell back against the wall opposite the door, breath completely knocked out of him, tears falling thick and fast down his cheeks, hands opening and closing uselessly at his sides. This…this was too much, on top of everything else. Kris’ mind felt numb as he stood there, pain stabbing and twisting his heart.

He heard a lock click and the door before him opened. Adam came out with the bastard and saw Kris against leaning the wall, shaking and crying. His eyes went wide and his jaw dropped. “Kris!”

Kris ran, ran just like Adam had run out on him two nights ago. He tore out of the club, roughly shoving people aside until he reached the open air.

He called out sick the next day. All through the night he had heard the words over and over again in his head: “Adam! Adam! Oh god…yes!” Nothing could drown them out, movies, music, and Matt trying to console him…they had all been completely ineffective. Even his own thoughts telling him to be a man about it all, to realize that he barely knew Adam and that he shouldn’t be so surprised or hurt, none of it lessened the pain or removed the sound of someone else crying out Adam’s name in the heat of passion.

It was just past noon and he was still in bed, clutching the pillow over his head tighter as if this would help. His stomach rumbled but he ignored it, stubbornly gripping the pillow, begging it to make the words and sounds disappear. All it did was muffle the sound of a knock on his door. He sat up, listening hard. He heard it again. *Is it Adam?* Kris wasn’t even sure right now how he would feel if it was Adam. What would he say to him? *Hi, I thought we had something good going but then you flipped out, ran away and fucked some other guy who looks like me. How are you?*

The sound came again, more insistent this time. No matter how conflicted he felt, he couldn’t ignore it, not if there was any chance in hell that they could make things right again. *You’re so pathetic.*
It wasn’t Adam. A short woman with long brown hair stood there. “Can I help you?” Kris asked her.

The woman looked at him, still in his pjs, and looking like he hadn’t slept in weeks. “No, but I think I might be able to help you. You must be Kris.” Kris nodded. “My name is Alisan. Adam is my best friend and he sent me here to talk to you. Can I come in?”

Unable to find any words to say to her, Kris merely stepped back and let her in. *What, so he sends his friend instead of coming himself? Coward.*

Kris motioned for her to sit down on the couch. “Can I get you anything?” He may be miserable and unshowered, but nothing could make him forget the manners his mama had taught him.

“No, thank you. Kris, please sit down.”

He did, wondering what on earth she could possibly say to help the situation.

“I know you are wondering why Adam isn’t here himself. I can see you’re in a great deal of pain after what you saw last night and --”

“How do you know about that?”

“Kris, I’ve been Adam’s best friend since middle school. There is almost nothing he doesn’t tell me about.”

He couldn’t help himself; he was desperate for answers and started throwing them out at her one after another. “Why did he run out on me? What happened to him on Monday?” He got up and started pacing the room. “Why didn’t he contact me again? Why was he having sex with a man who looks like me?”

“What a there, one at a time. There’s a lot going on here that you don’t understand yet.”

“Then tell me! Please, Alisan… I… I feel like I’m going crazy.”

Alisan looked at him with sympathy, took his hand and pulled it until he was sitting down again. “Kris, Adam really wants to be with you…”

“Ha! So that’s why he’s fucking some guy in the --”

“Please, let me finish. He wants to be with you, he just isn’t sure how to do that. I’m sure he told you that he doesn’t normally date.”

Kris shrugged. “Yeah, he did.”

“Weren’t you curious about that?”

“Of course I was! But he wouldn’t talk about it, he never talked about himself.”

“There’s a reason for that, and Adam wants me to tell you about it.” She shook her head. “I’m not sure if he ever intended on you knowing, but after last night, when he saw you there….” She looked at Kris. “You are obviously really special to him Kris, even if you don’t realize it yet. There’s hardly anyone on this earth who knows what I’m about to tell you.”

Kris didn’t make a sound, hoping against hope that whatever she said would make his pain go away.

She took a deep breath and faced him squarely. “When Adam was a senior in high school, he was gang raped and beaten within an inch of his life by a group of guys that he thought were his friends.”
Kris gaped at her, feeling nauseous and utterly horrorstruck.

“There were eight of them, people that Adam knew and trusted, guys who had drawn him into their circle of friendship over the course of that year. All of them, they raped him anally and orally, and beat him so badly that he lost consciousness and needed intensive care for weeks.” She began to cry a little. “He…he had reconstructive surgery…on the soft palate in his throat and…” She dropped her head. “I thought he was going to die. The damage to his body was so bad…they broke him, Kris, inside and out.”

Tears streamed unchecked down Kris’ face and into his lap. *Oh my god…oh my god…Adam…* Adam…Adam… He wrapped his arms around himself, wishing he could hug Adam instead. Alisan’s revelation had not taken away his pain at all; instead her words had transformed it into a different kind of pain altogether.

“He was such a carefree, trusting spirit…” She looked at Kris again. “That’s still in there, Kris, but not very many people get to see it.”

Kris wiped his eyes with both his palms. He cast about for something to say to Alisan, but all he could think about was an unsuspecting Adam being raped and beaten unconscious. His shocked brain finally landed on one of his earlier questions. “So, so on Monday…”

“A flashback, hon, Adam had a flashback.”

“Oh my god! I did hurt him! I…I made him remember…that…” He leapt of the couch and began to pace again, feeling the worst he had ever felt in his entire life. “Oh my god…oh my god…poor Adam…no wonder he ran away from me!”

“Kris, stop. There is no way you could have known.”

But Kris carried on mentally beating himself up. “What have I done…what have I done?”

“Kris!” Alisan stood up, took him by the shoulders and shook him; she was surprisingly strong for such a small woman. “Stop it! It won’t help Adam. He doesn’t blame you, he blames himself.”

“What?” He blinked, surprised. “Why would he do that?”

“Because he let his guard down…he cared about you, Kris. You have no idea how rare that is for him. Didn’t you hear me earlier? He wants to be with you.”

*Could that really be true?* “I’m…I’m so confused, Alisan. What about last night?”

Alisan sighed heavily. “Adam uses men to feel powerful, but there’s no emotional connection whatsoever. After he had the flashback on Monday, I’m sure he felt the need to regain some semblance of control.”

“But he looked just like me!”

“Kris, surely you can piece that together on your own?”

He sat down slowly and thought for a minute. He glanced at Alisan. “Does he really want me? Even after I…” He couldn’t bring himself to say it.

“He does, but I’m not going to lie and say it will be easy, and Kris…” She paused for a moment as if weighing her words, “I’m not going to tell you not to break his heart. You have to do what you think is right for you.”
Kris looked at her in disbelief. “Are you kidding me? You think…you think that I won’t want him now…because of…what you told me about him?”

“That’s not what I meant. You just need to understand that making this work with Adam is going to be…he hasn’t dated anyone in over eight years. He doesn’t know how to trust men or even be friends with them.”

“I don’t care Alisan. You go and you tell him that I’ll do whatever it takes to be with him. Will you tell him that?”

Alisan smiled for the first time since she had come in. “Yes. Yes, I will.”

After Alisan left, Kris went straight to his guitar case and got out his half of the tie. He sat down on his bed and stroked it lovingly. The silky fabric was pressed firmly to his heart when he finally fell asleep.

**Chapter 11**

Adam was pacing. _Why isn’t she back yet? What’s taking her so long?_ He picked at his thumbnail and flicked a chip of black polish onto the floor. _What if he doesn’t want me anymore? I wouldn’t blame him._ Adam had spent much of the afternoon worrying. Alisan had been shocked but pleasantly surprised when he told her that he wanted Kris to know about his past. He still felt like a coward, not being able to do it himself, but… _you know you couldn’t have done that, don’t fucking kid yourself._

Had it been the right thing to do? He’d never intended for anyone new to find out. When he made the decision last night, it had seemed like the only way to keep Kris in his life, but… _It’s too late now._ Adam felt so vulnerable with his gruesome tale being talked about by them. _What if Kris thinks I’m just a damaged freak? Fuck!_ He hated waiting.

At three o’clock, he finally heard a light knock on his door. He ran over and unlocked it, swung it open and dragged Alisan unceremoniously into his apartment. “What did he say? What did he saaaaayyyyy?”

“Hold on, let me take my coat off,” she said with a tinkling laugh.

“Gah! Don’t toy with me Ali! You know I’ve been driving myself crazy over here! Tell mee!” He tugged on her coat like a little boy begging for cookies.

She shooed him away, took her coat off, and tossed it on a chair. Then she turned to face him. “He said, and I quote, ‘tell him that I’ll do whatever it takes to be with him.’”

Adam let out a tiny gasp and covered his mouth with his hands. “Really? Did he really say that?” he asked through his fingers.

She nodded, smiling.

Adam felt a giddy joy bubbling up inside him and he giggled in a scared sort of way, like he was afraid to feel this happy, as if he didn’t deserve the cookies. He took his hands away from his face. “What should I do? What do I do now?”
“Adam, you’re a big boy. What do you want to do?”

“I want to see him,” he said immediately. “but…should I go there? Should I wait for him to come here? I don’t even have his phone number. Maybe I should go to his place. Should I go to his place, Ali?”

“Oh my god, you sound exactly like a fourteen year old girl!” She slapped him on the arm and pecked him on the cheek. “Are you ready for him to be in your apartment again?”

Adam frowned. “I…I don’t…. shit, I’m going to suck at this.”

“You just need some practice, honey, and Kris is more than willing.”

There was suddenly a wicked glint in his eye.

Alisan laughed at him. “Oh no, I know that look. You had better go find that boy and quick.”

“But my car, it’s still there!” He’d been staying with Alisan since Monday and hadn’t even thought about it. “Can I have a ride?”

“You bet, puppy, on one condition…that you get your ass working on the rest of those tracks again soon.”

Adam nodded his head fervently. “I will, Ali, I will. Now help me decide what to wear!”

When Adam and Alisan left his apartment an hour later, he was wearing his I’m-not-having-sex-tonight pants, a regular pair of black jeans with a normal zipper and everything. He felt very nervous because he had a feeling that they would have sex tonight and the jeans were so…accessible. I want this. I want to be…normal…with Kris.

“You look so tense,” said Alisan. “Are you okay?”

“Yes…yeah, I’m just…fuck…” He wrung his hands. “What am I going to say to him?”

She put a hand on his knee and squeezed it reassuringly. “I’m sure you’ll figure it out.”

“Alisan, I’m so glad I have you. I…thank you, for everything you’ve done for me.”

“Aww, puppy, you know how much I love you. Besides, you’d do the same for me.”

“You know I would,” he said, smiling at her fondly.

As they continued driving, Adam felt more and more like he was being chaperoned by his mom on a first date. When he could see his car down the street, he asked Alisan to pull over. “This is fine, Ali, I’ll walk from here, okay?”

She nodded with understanding and stopped the car along the curb. “Have fun! Don’t stay out too late!” she said teasingly.

He stuck his tongue out at her and got out. His boots clicked on the cement as he walked, hands shoved deeply into the pockets of the no-sex pants. A few minutes later he was at the door with his hand raised, finger hovering over the bell. Do it. Just push it already. The two inches between the tip of his finger and the bell felt like a mile, but he took in a deep breath and pressed it quickly.

Adam waited. No one came to the door. What if he’s not here? What if he saw me out the window and…and… changed his mind? But in the next second the door opened, and there stood a dripping
wet Kris, wearing only a pair of black pajama pants and looking like he’d just stepped out of the shower…or my fantasies. Adam caught his breath. Christ!

“Adam!” Kris’ face lit up and he threw his arms around Adam, pulling him close.

Kris smelled like…heaven, sex, kittens and rainbows and hot gorgeous body can we please fuck now? It didn’t help that he was half naked and…wet, oh my god. Adam put his arms around Kris, trying to hug him like it was a familiar thing instead of awkward. Trying not to pounce on him right now, you mean. Yeah, that too.

Adam couldn’t help it; he started running his hands all over Kris’ naked, damp back. Kris looked up into Adam’s eyes. “We need to talk about a few things…”

Damn. Maybe no-sex pants will stay that way after all.

“…but,” Kris continued with a smile, “it can wait until…” He reached up, pulled Adam’s head down and kissed him, though very tentatively.

He's being gentle with me now...shit. Adam drew back and turned his head to whisper in Kris' ear. “Let’s try that again, shall we? And this time like you mean it.”

Kris shuddered and took the advice, twining his hands in Adam’s hair and kissing him more fiercely. Adam wrapped his arms tightly around Kris, lifted him up to his toes and kissed him back like he was trying to get every last bit of chocolate out of a pudding cup with his tongue. Kris moaned deeply as Adam tasted every inch of that sweet, sweet mouth.

“That,” Adam said breathing heavily a few minutes later, “was much better.”

“Fuck,” said Kris, equally winded.

“We should probably go inside if we’re going to do that,” he teased.

Kris chuckled and led them inside. “I take it you didn’t walk here.”

“No. Ali dropped me off since I left my car here that night.” Had they really reached that topic so soon? Can we please go back to the kissing?

Kris took his hand and pulled him down to the couch. “Adam, where did you go? I was so worried about you.”

Adam felt the shame rising up again. “Ali came and picked me up. I stayed with her for a few days. I…I’m really sorry, it was stupid to run out like that.”

“No! I’m not blaming you. What I’m trying to say here is…I really care about you and that’s why I was so worried, okay, it’s not your fault…if anything it’s m--”

“There is no way you could have known.”

Kris sighed. “That’s exactly what Alisan said.”

“She’s a smart girl, Ali.” Adam was feeling very uncomfortable with this kind of open talk with another man. Even though it was Kris. You just need to practice, right? That’s what Ali said.

“Adam, I’m so sorry about…about what happened to you,” Kris said sadly.

“I don’t want your pity, Kris!” he said sharply and stood up, beginning to pace.Fuck…fuck! I can’t
do this. He sat down again and leaned over, trying to kiss him again, but Kris pulled away.

“I have an idea. How about you sing me something? You have such an incredible voice,” he said, getting up and walking into his bedroom. He came back out pulling a t-shirt over his head. “I’ll even accompany you.”

Shit. He’s onto me, and there goes that beautiful naked chest. Damn. But you want this…remember? Normal people don’t use sex like a drug. Adam breathed deeply into his stomach, trying to quell the feeling of panic that had started to surface a minute ago. “Okay…yeah, that sounds good. What should I sing?”

“Whatever you want.” Kris sat down on the piano bench, pushed back the fallboard and ghosted his fingers lightly over the keys.

Adam thought for a moment, and then it came to him. “Do you know ‘I Can’t Get No Satisfaction?’” he asked with a sly grin.

Kris burst into laughter, nodded, and began to play. Adam walked over and stood next to the piano, waited a few bars and then jumped in. He poured out all the nervous energy he’d been feeling into the song, and soon they were both into it, rocking out and starting to improvise here and there.

When they’d had enough of messing around with riffs and lyrics, they let the song fade out, chuckling together. “That was fun!” Adam said, looking surprised and bright eyed.

“It was. You are an amazing vocalist, Adam. Were did you learn to sing like that?”

“Oh, well I had lessons, you know, a long time ago,” he said with a mixture of pride and embarrassment.

Kris just beamed at him. “Okay, now it’s my turn.” His slender fingers pressed the keys softly and then he began to sing.

I don’t know you
But I want you
All the more for that
Words fall through me
And always fool me
And I can’t react
And games that never amount
To more than they’re meant
Will play themselves out
Oh my god. Adam felt his heart clench in his chest.

Take this sinking boat and point it home
We've still got time
Raise your hopeful voice you have a choice
You've made it now

It's too much. His eyes were watering despite himself. No, you're not going to cry.

Falling slowly, eyes that know me
And I can't go back
Moods that take me and erase me
And I'm painted black

Kris stood up from the piano, turned to face Adam, and sang the last lines a cappella.

You have suffered enough
And warred with yourself
It's time that you won

I'm not going to survive this. He felt steady hands on his cheeks, angling his head downward until their lips touched softly, briefly. Kris stroked Adam’s face with the side of one hand and then looked deeply into his eyes. This is...I don’t know how... He must have looked scared, because Kris changed his tactics immediately. His eyes shifted from meaningful and tender to lustful in a heartbeat. He bent his head and licked a broad stripe right where he had once bitten Adam. Adam felt himself respond instantly. This I know how to do.

Adam sat down on the piano bench, pulled Kris onto his lap and began to roll his hips upwards in steady circles.

Kris groaned, wrapped his arms and legs around Adam and ground down, seeking friction and rhythm. Adam put his hands on those firm ass cheeks and sped up his movements.

“Wait...wait,” Kris said breathlessly, “I want to...” He slid down to the floor onto his knees and put both hands on Adam’s thighs. Adam felt his thighs being pushed apart very slowly, as if Kris was waiting to be stopped. Like you would stop him...world-class cocksucker, remember? Kris leaned in,
covered Adam’s bulge with his warm mouth and just breathed, open-mouthed; hot air on the exhale, cool when he inhaled, over and over until Adam couldn’t take it anymore.

He pushed Kris’ head up and looked down at the button of the no-sex pants, which were about to be deflowered. You can do this. “Do it, Kris. You can…” He indicated the button with a nod.

Kris gently unfastened it, looking into Adam’s eyes the whole time. “Should I keep going?” he asked.

This is okay. I’m going to get a seriously good blowjob from a blazing hot man. “Yes, don’t stop.”

Kris’s gaze never wavered as he unzipped Adam’s fly tooth by tooth. This is kind of…sexy.

When Kris had finally exposed Adam’s boxer briefs, he leaned in again and touched the very tip of his tongue to the growing wet spot that darkened the light blue cotton. He flicked his tongue. Adam’s hips jerked involuntarily. Jesus! He felt Kris’s mouth close around the tip of his head through the fabric and suck lightly. Give it up, Lambert, you know you want to…just let him take control…just give it up for a few minutes.

Adam gripped the waistband of his jeans and briefs, lifted his hips and pushed them down all the way to his knees. Kris glanced at Adam briefly for confirmation and then pulled his pants off completely.

And then Kris was staring, jaw hanging slightly open. Obviously he’d seen Adam’s dick before, but he hadn’t seen him quite so exposed.

Okay…it’s good, it’s all good. Adam had been stared at by countless men, but it had never made him blush until now. He tried to summon his confidence. “I know you can open that gorgeous mouth of yours even wider,” he smirked and stroked himself once.

“You asked for it,” Kris retorted with a sexy grin that almost made Adam want to kiss him again right now…almost. He ran his fingertips lightly on the inside of Adam’s thighs all the way to his balls and then graced them with his nails.

Adam shivered and wove his hands into Kris’ slightly damp hair. Deep brown eyes gazed up at him and then Kris placed a feather-light kiss right at the base of his cock and kneaded his thighs. Adam’s dick jumped and started leaking even more. He was already starting to breathe shallowly. Shit…he’s barely even started!

Kris began a series of torturous licks and kisses on his inner thighs and then cupped and gently squeezed his sac. He ran his tongue around and around Adam’s balls and then sucked one into his mouth. Adam moaned softly, unable to help himself. He was usually quiet and in control, used to making other men whimper, pant and call out his name.

Adam watched as Kris’s lips moved slowly to the head of his cock and hovered millimeters from it, teasing it with hot breath. “Kris,” Adam said gritting his teeth, “you’re killing me here.”

Kris chuckled and lowered his mouth down around the head, exploring the slit in the center with his tongue. He tightened his lips and moved them up and down over the ridge while tonguing the patch of skin below it. Fuck…fuck…fuck… “Fuck!”

Sticking his tongue all the way out, Kris enveloped Adam’s shaft with his mouth. He kept going until Adam felt his cock bump the back of Kris’ throat. “Oh…oh my g--” he groaned, squeezing his eyes shut and leaning his head back. Adam couldn’t even pretend to be in control anymore as Kris wrapped his lips firmly around Adam’s length and popped them up over the head and down to the
base slowly and repeatedly. “Kris…Kris…shit…” he panted, gripping Kris’ hair tightly.

“Mmmm,” Kris hummed. Adam felt the vibrations and gave a huge shudder in response. He opened his eyes when he felt the cool air on his dick. Kris stared Adam down and stroked him quickly with his hand, squeezing at the bottom with every pass and using his other hand to tease Adam’s balls. Adam let out a garbled sound from the back of his throat and knew that he was not going to last much longer.

“Holy mother of…Kris!…I’m…”

Kris suddenly stopped his hands and grasped the base firmly, a sinful smile playing on his lips.

“Fuck!” Adam shouted again, shaking from head to toe. He looked at Kris in wonder. Goddamn!

Kris just smiled innocently and resumed ravaging Adam’s cock with his mouth and lips, then used his hand to draw it even further into his mouth. Adam was right on the edge again. He dug his fingernails in deep and began yanking at Kris’ hair. Kris clamped his mouth down and sucked hard as he moved his hand faster, faster, faster...

“Oh…oh…ohmygod!” Adam cried and flung himself backwards, hitting the piano keys with his shoulders and making a loud chorus of jangled notes ring out.

Chapter 12

The dissonant notes hung in the air for a few seconds before fading away.

Kris wiped a dribble of cum off his chin with a finger and sucked on it, looking very pleased with himself.

Adam sat up on the bench and stared speechlessly at the man who had just given him the single most erotic experience of his life. No one had ever been so attentive in pleasing him; no one had ever made him let go like that. He felt a white-hot flame of desire burning throughout his body, a fire so scorching that he thought his bones would melt from it. Never had he wanted anything or anyone as much as he wanted Kris in that moment.

He sprang from the bench and tackled Kris to the floor with his entire body, pawing, kissing, licking and biting every inch of skin he could reach. Kris groaned loudly under him, clutching his back and hair. But it wasn’t enough. Get them off…got to fucking get them off! He was frantic with need, hands trembling so hard that he couldn’t even handle the simplicity of Kris’ shirt.

Kris came to the rescue and pulled his shirt over his head, only getting it half way off before Adam attacked him again. In between bites and kisses, Kris pushed down his pajama pants and kicked them off.

Adam sat back for a moment, shaking. Insane, this is fucking insane…I’m completely out of control here. But he couldn’t help it. He was rock hard again, on fire, and the only one that could quench the flames was Kris.

“Are…you…okay?” Kris panted.

“I need you,” was all he could manage before falling on Kris again, kissing his face, his neck, his
nipples, his knees...everywhere except his cock, which he stroked instead. Soon, I'll get there soon. Kris didn’t seem to mind at all; he was completely falling apart under Adam, voice growing hoarse with moans and cries, body writhing on the floor as if he were in pain.

“I need you...now,” Adam pleaded urgently.

“Fuck, Adam! Take me already before I die here!” Kris shouted.

In his desperation, Adam almost forgot to use a condom. He was all lined up and ready to go when he remembered. “Shit!” He scrambled for his pants. “I can’t...help me!”

Kris quickly pulled out a condom and the lube, tore open the packet and prepped Adam. Then, as if he could sense what Adam needed, he lay back on the floor and bent his knees, pulled them up to his chest and spread his legs as wide as he could.

Adam clambered on top of Kris and drove into him, his hips thrusting wildly. He put his hands on Kris’ knees and pushed them back until his toes touched the floor above his head.

He pounded Kris into the floor, driven crazy with lust like a feral animal, unable to speak or make any sounds other than his painfully labored breathing. He clenched Kris’ cock and pumped it furiously. It only took a few strokes before Kris’ entire body tensed and he came hard all over his stomach, crying out Adam’s name.

Adam’s body was dripping with sweat as he thrust once more, bit down on his tongue and emptied himself with a strangled sob, his eyes glassy with tears. He collapsed on top of Kris, shaking and heaving for breath. A single tear fell onto Kris’ shoulder.

“Adam.” Kris lifted a hand and wiped another tear from Adam’s cheek.

Adam couldn’t speak. He just lay there shivering on top of Kris, arms and legs spread eagle. He felt dizzy and scared at the intensity of what had just occurred.

“Adam,” Kris repeated with concern. He tried to move but Adam’s dead weight was pinning him to the floor. Flexing his arm muscles, he pushed Adam’s shoulders straight up and rolled him onto his side. Then Kris wrapped his arms tightly around him and started stroking his hair reassuringly.

What the fuck was that! Adam suddenly felt like bolting up from the floor and running as fast as he could back to his apartment, his sanctuary. At the same time, he found that he was enjoying the sticky warmth of Kris’ body pressed against his back and was comforted by Kris’ hand in his hair. The two feelings battled within him until the urge to run gradually abated. His eyes became drowsy and without thinking about it, he snuggled back into Kris. He feels so nice.

“We can’t stay here,” Kris said softly, “Matt is going to be home soon.”

But Adam didn’t want to move now that he was so comfortable and tired. “Don’t care,” he grumbled.

“Come on, cutie.” Kris got up and tried to pull Adam up with him.

“M’kay.” Adam said, rising to his feet and smacking his lips sleepily.

Kris took his hand and Adam followed him to his bedroom, dragging his feet as exhaustion set in. The last thing he remembered before he fell asleep in the small bed was the feel of Kris’ lips on his forehead.
Before Adam even opened his eyes, he knew that he was not in his own bed. Don’t panic…you’re in Kris’ bed…but don’t panic…it’s going to be okay…don’t panic. He felt his heart speed up despite his efforts to calm down. Wait a minute…where is he? Adam suddenly realized that he was alone in the bed. He opened his eyes and sat up, looked around, and saw by the clock on the wall that it was 10pm. The bedroom door was closed and the room was warm and silent.

Then the sound of soft, steady breathing reached his ears. He looked over the side of the bed and saw Kris curled up in a nest of blankets on the floor. At the sight of him lying there, Adam felt a lump form in his throat. God, you are such a baby these days…so weak. But something painful was taking place in Adam’s heart.

Everything Kris was doing made Adam want to trust him, but the thought of letting him in was absolutely terrifying. Even though he didn’t think that Kris would hurt him on purpose, the broken record still played in his head. Trusting makes you weak, vulnerable…trust equals pain, weakness equals pain. For years these words had been his mantra and he thought they had served him well, but he looked at Kris again and thought that maybe he’d been missing out.

Trust. A few hours ago he’d completely put himself at Kris’ mercy and then lost control altogether in the frighteningly intense and hedonistic sex that followed. What the fuck was that? He remembered crying near the end of it; the whole thing still felt like a mystery to him. And then he cuddled me. And I liked it. And now I’m in his bed. He groaned out loud and put his head in his hands.

“Adam?” a groggy voice said from the floor.

Reach out to him…you can do it…this is what normal people do.

Before he could change his mind, Adam leaned over and grasped Kris’ hand, then pulled him onto the bed. They shifted around in the small space until Kris was snuggled into Adam’s arms. This is good. This is…better. He felt more manly and strong holding Kris.

“Kris?”

“Hmmm?”

“Thank you for…” For giving me the best blowjob in the history of sex. For letting me fuck you like an animal. For holding me. For sleeping on the floor. For being patient and understanding. “For being you.” Oh my god, Lambert, that was the lamest, cheesiest, most Hollywood movie thing to say. His only excuse was that he had no experience in this area.

Kris just smiled and kissed Adam on the cheek.

“Kris?”

“Hmmm?”

“I…I can’t stay here tonight.” Why is this so fucking hard?

“I know. It’s okay, really, but thank you for this.” He burrowed himself deeper into Adam’s embrace and sighed contentedly.
I like this. Maybe tomorrow we can…oh no! Adam had just remembered what day it was.

“Kris?”

“Hmmm?”

“I have to work tomorrow night.” He felt Kris stiffen in his arms. *Shit. How is this going to work?* Adam had been fucking random strangers for years and he wasn’t sure he knew how to stop. *You have to…you can’t mess this up.* “I’m not going to…I won’t…”

Kris sat up and turned to look at Adam, clearly worried. “Can you promise me that?”

“I…” *Shit!*

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have asked you that,” Kris said sadly, “I know it wasn’t fair. I just hoped that I was, well, more than just a good fuck.”

“You are, Kris…you’re a superb fuck,” he teased, “but you’re also more than that. Look, it’s obvious that I don’t know what the hell I’m doing here. All I know is that I want to be with you…that I want to, you know, make this work somehow.” *There. I said it.*

Kris smiled brightly. “You do?”

“Yes.”

Kris’ bright smile became like the sun. *I put that smile there!* In fact, Adam felt like he never wanted to do anything to make it disappear ever again. “I know! How about you come to the club tomorrow to watch my set? Then I can have my way with you after I’m done singing,” he smirked.

Kris’ breath hitched and then he threw his arms around Adam and kissed him fiercely.

“You know,” Adam said, drawing back and grinning wickedly, “I don’t have to hurry off just yet. How about I have my way with you right now?”

Kris looked at him with those deep brown eyes and licked his lips.

Two hours later Adam was back at his apartment, feeling spent but happy. *Happy? Yeah…I’m happy.* He grinned and headed to the bathroom. *Guess I can’t call these ‘no-sex’ pants anymore.* The thought occurred to him that he might need to go shopping for more pairs of regular pants, since most of the ones he owned had been custom made. As he showered, he thought about how much his life was about to change and it scared him more than he wanted to admit.

***

The next day Adam woke up to his stomach rumbling loudly. It was ten o’clock on Friday morning. He got out of bed and went into his small kitchen, but was annoyed to find that he had run out of wheat bread. *I’ve got to do some shopping.* Adam’s regular routine had been seriously disrupted this week and he had completely neglected things like shopping, laundry and keeping his apartment neat. Plus, he couldn’t even remember the last time he was in the studio. It was disconcerting; routines helped him feel in control of his life. He vowed to catch up on everything today and to spend some time recording.
After stocking up at Whole Foods and throwing a load of clothes in the washer in his bathroom, Adam finally sat down in his studio. All of the songs he was working on reflected the personality that he showed the outside world. Adam frequently used singing as therapy when he was struggling, but he never recorded any of that.

As 5pm drew nearer, Adam felt satisfied that he had accomplished everything he’d planned for today, and he allowed himself to relax a bit before starting on his regular pre-work routine. He walked into his bedroom and got on his hands and knees to reach under the bed. After a minute of groping around, his hand finally landed on a small wooden box. It had belonged to his grandfather, who had died before Adam was born. His mother had given it to him after he had finally been released from the hospital all those years ago; she told him to put happy memories in it. At the time, Adam had been certain that the box would be empty for the rest of his life. Of course, he had also planned not to be around long enough to put anything in it anyway.

Adam sat down on his bed and traced the intricate patterns worked into the wood with his thumbs. Even though he had met Kris only three and a half weeks ago, he knew in his heart that the two things in that box belonged there.

He lifted the lid slowly and caressed the silky cloth inside. After the numerous times he had masturbated with it, he had decided to wash the tie before putting it in the box. Kris’ necklace with the small note pendant lay coiled up beside it. He looped a finger through the cord and pulled it out. Holding it up in the air before him, Adam silently thanked the universe for the existence of Macy’s.

***

 Damn it, I should have left myself more time! A pair of regular pants and a pair of sex pants lay side by side on Adam’s bed; he had been trying to decide which to wear for about fifteen minutes. He was behind schedule and thoroughly irritated about it. Even though he knew he was going to be with Kris after the show, he didn’t want to ruin his image by appearing different in any way. In the end, he put on the sex pants and decided he would teach Kris how to get into them tonight. Tonight… Adam was undecided about where to take Kris after his set was over: the sex room or his apartment? He gritted his teeth in frustration, weighing the options. The sex room was only about sex and Kris was more to him than that. But his apartment… To Adam, letting Kris back into his bed on purpose was almost the equivalent of letting him in emotionally. When he went downstairs at seven o’clock, he still didn’t know what to do.

Adam was rattled. He was sitting at the bar, munching on a small dinner and looking around the room. As usual, no one tried to talk to him; the aura of mystery and inapproachability was one he had worked hard to achieve and it was very effective. Thirty minutes until he had to be on stage, and without indulging in his normal habit of evaluating potential targets, he didn’t know what to do with himself. Even though he knew it was irrational, he felt exposed somehow. To make things worse, he was still agonizing over where to take Kris later. That is, if Kris showed up at all.

 Only fifteen minutes to go, where is he? For such a seemingly self-confident man, Adam was really quite insecure and he could not fathom why Kris wanted him. You’re just a damaged fucking whore, Lambert, any man in their right mind would run screaming from a relationship with you. Despite Kris’ obvious dedication, Adam couldn’t help but feel that it was too good to be true.

 Ten minutes. He’s not coming…he’s finally realized what a freak you are and changed his mind. Five minutes. But I was going to let him take off my sex pants. Adam heard his name being
announced and made his way to the stage, trying not to let his pout show. The crowd cheered madly and all the short, brown-haired, brown-eyed men tried to look their sexiest.

He took his place center stage and checked the audience again for Kris. Disappointment and sadness coursed through him when he saw no sign of that beautiful face. See, I told you so. Pull yourself together…you’ve got a show to do. After a few deep breaths he began his first number, a catchy tune that clashed with his mood. He made a small bow when it was over and when he raised his head…Kris! There he was, pushing his way through the bodies, trying to get closer to the stage.

Adam was so elated that he couldn’t contain a beaming smile directed at Kris. The other men looked curiously at the man shoving them out of his way.

After Kris’ arrival, it was all Adam could do not to jump off the stage and to hell with singing tonight. He couldn’t wait to feel his body, to hear his voice, to see his smile. And he’s here…he really wants to be with me after all.

By the time the show was over, Kris had only managed to get half way to the stage. It seemed that a group of men were stubbornly refusing to let him pass, as if they knew that he was a threat to their chances. Adam didn’t care. He bowed quickly and made a direct path to Kris. The men parted before him like some scene from a movie.

“Come on,” Adam said when he reached his goal.

Kris smiled deviously at him and then whispered in his ear, “let’s go to the back room. I want them to see us go in there together and I want them to hear us fuck…loudly.”

Adam stared at him. Little rabbit my ass! This is going to be one hot mother fucking night.

Chapter 13

Kris did not like the way all those men were staring at Adam…my Adam…or the way they had tried to stop him from reaching the stage. Ha! I’ll show them. I hope they even listen at the door! He gripped Adam’s hand possessively as they walked to the back room and felt smug knowing that numerous curious and jealous eyes were watching them.

Adam stopped right outside the room. “Kris, wait inside for me…I want to go get something, okay?” He unlocked the door, gave Kris a quick kiss and then left.

Okay, that was unexpected. He walked around the room a bit and spotted the desk in the corner. Smiling, he went over to it and ran his fingers across the smooth surface, remembering their first night together.

Adam returned with a blanket that Kris recognized at once as his bedspread. Wow. Kris had sensed that it was too soon for him to be allowed back in Adam’s apartment and he had no problem waiting, but this…He knew it was Adam’s way of showing some commitment. He was moved and very turned on at the same time.

Adam spread the blanket down on the floor and looked at Kris nervously, as if he were wondering if he’d done the right thing. Kris closed the space between them and pressed his body to Adam’s, then rolled his hips and looked into that worried face with as much want as he could manage. Adam returned the look immediately, all confidence returned. He gripped Kris’ face and kissed him
passionately while taking them down to the blanket. *Yes please.*

Kris lay back willingly and reveled in those freckled lips claiming him again and again. When the need for air became too great, they pulled apart and stared hungrily at each other. Adam propped himself up on one elbow, reached his hand down between Kris’ thighs and squeezed him firmly. His already stiff cock grew harder as Adam began to rub continuous circles over it. Kris closed his eyes and groaned, loudly. “Adam!” he cried out, hoping to make himself heard out in the hallway.

Adam snickered a little. “Trying to claim your territory?”

“You’re damn right I am.”

Adam grew serious and stopped his hand. “Kris, I…I want to show you something. I want to show you how to get into my pants,” he said with a bit of a laugh.

*Is he saying what I think he’s saying? First the blanket and now this!*

“Wow…are you sure?”

Adam rolled over onto his back. “Yes.”

The belt and buckle were easy enough, but after they were gone, it seemed that whatever mechanism was there was invisible.

Adam took Kris’ hand and brought it to the top of the waistband at his hip. He curved one of Kris’ fingers inside the band and Kris could feel a tiny little hook there. Adam pushed his finger down deeper inside and sure enough, there was a series of little hooks that went down about four inches.

“How on earth do you get these tiny things undone?” Kris asked, bewildered.

“Practice,” Adam smirked. “Go on, try it.”

Kris tried several times before he was successful with the first hook, but it took both of his hands to do it. After that, the rest were a little easier.

“Keep going. I want you to…undress me.” Adam looked a little scared.

“You don’t have to do this…it’s okay, really.” *What if I make him have another flashback?*

“No. I want you to, Kris, please. Just go slowly and I’ll be okay.”

Kris forgot about the people in the hallway. He was so touched by Adam’s show of trust that his eyes were getting misty. Leaving Adam’s pants for the moment, he gently, gradually pushed up his shirt until it was bunched under his chin. He traced his fingers over Adam’s chest and around his nipples. Adam shivered and nodded, indicating that he was ready for more.

Kris pulled the shirt over Adam’s head and arms until it was off. “Beautiful,” he whispered. *Look at all those freckles.* He went back those crazy pants and, with difficulty, peeled them off. *More freckles.* Kris couldn’t help but stare at Adam’s completely naked, utterly gorgeous body just lying there…*for me.*

“Kris, do something…please, kiss me or touch me…something…anything except biting.”

*He feels exposed.* Kris quickly shed his own clothing and lay down next to Adam, wrapping his right leg over him and placing tender kisses on his chest. Soon he got lost in kissing Adam’s body. He got up on his knees and started lapping at those freckles wherever he saw them, which was everywhere.

Adam shuddered and moaned, his voice reaching a higher pitch when Kris’ lips landed around his
pulsing cock. “World-class,” he muttered, and started thrusting himself up into Kris’ mouth.

**So good… I could do this all night.** Kris loved the feel of Adam in his mouth, loved making him fall apart like this.

But it seemed that Adam had other plans. He pulled Kris on top of him until he was straddling him.

Kris wanted to surprise Adam too, just a little bit. He stuck his finger into his mouth and sucked on it until it was dripping wet. Throwing his best sex face at Adam, he reached behind and pushed a finger deep into his hole. He closed his eyes and arched back, fucking himself hard. Knowing that Adam was watching was so erotic that Kris forgot he was putting on a show. He brushed his prostate and groaned, then rocked faster and faster.

Suddenly Adam’s hands were on his hips. Kris opened his eyes and saw that the predator had returned. Adam touched the tip of Kris’ cock, looked at the pre-cum on his finger and then put it to his lips. “Oh my god,” Kris whimpered. And then in that Adam’s-limbs-were-made-to-manhandle-Kris way, he was on his back in a flash, Adam hovering over him and looking like a ravenous wolf. “You are a sexy beast,” he growled, “but I’m bigger than you.” And with that, he sank his teeth into Kris’ shoulder.

Yes… mark me, claim me… I’m yours. “I’m yours, Adam,” he moaned, “take me… fuck me… I’m yours.”

Adam flipped him so he was on his hands and knees and then reached over to his pants for the seemingly inexhaustible supply of condoms. Kris expected to feel Adam’s dick in him, but instead he felt a long finger. He looked back over his shoulder.

“Taking over for you, my sexy little rabbit beast,” Adam leered. Kris chuckled, but his laugh quickly turned into a moan as Adam touched that spot inside that made his head swim with pleasure, over and over again, then added another finger without skipping a beat.

*I could come just like this.* There was only a split second between the loss of Adam’s fingers and the fullness of his cock stretching into Kris. I’m so ready… so ready… But then his arms were pulled out from under him and pinned to his sides. He caught his breath, thinking that he was going to crash to the floor onto his face, but Adam wrapped his strong arms completely around Kris’ chest and arms, pulled him back onto his lap and thrust up into him forcefully. Kris cried out as Adam locked them together and pounded into him from the bottom. “Fuck me, Adam! Do it harder!”

“Oh god… oh… Kris!” He ramped up his speed to a dizzying pace and started biting Kris’ shoulders without mercy. Kris wrenched his arms free, gripped Adam’s thighs and impaled himself back onto Adam again and again. Their knees spread wider and wider on the blanket until he could feel Adam’s balls slapping into him with every thrust.

Adam yanked Kris’ hand away from his thigh and Kris felt his own hand around his throbbing cock, covered by Adam’s, making him stroke himself feverishly until he drooled and babbled incoherently.

“Kris!… I can’t hold off… I…” Adam wailed and let out a high, loud, moan that pierced the air.

“Come!” Kris shouted over Adam’s cry, and threw his head back in ecstasy onto the shoulder behind him as his orgasm erupted throughout his body, igniting every nerve as hot waves of cum spilled onto their joined hands and landed on the blanket.

Adam’s howling moan continued to draw out, echoing against the walls of the sex room, then it jumped an octave as if he were singing it; he gave a last almighty thrust and clenched his whole body
around Kris, crushing him to his chest as he came.

Gradually Adam’s wail faded away into whimpers and mewling little cries. Without pulling out, he rolled them onto their sides and draped a corner of the blanket over their spent and shaking bodies.

Kris knew in his heart that they’d just taken their relationship to a new level. He’s starting to trust me. He sank further into his Adam-cocoon and listened to the sound of their heartbeats slowing down.

“Kris?”

“Yeah, baby.” Oops.

But either Adam didn’t mind or just decided to ignore the term of affection. “What do we do now?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well…we’re…boyfriends now, right?” He sounded a bit anxious about this.

Kris squeezed Adam’s hand. “I hope we are, because I don’t do this with friends,” he chuckled.

Adam laughed, too and Kris could feel it all over his body.

“I haven’t had a boyfriend since I was 19 years old, and…let’s just say that it didn’t go well and…”

Kris just ran a thumb over Adam’s hand and listened.

“…and I really don’t know how to do this,” he finished, sounding very embarrassed.

“I think you’re doing just fine, and we’ll figure it out together, okay? Don’t worry.”

Adam sighed deeply and they lay in silence for a minute. “I can’t feel my left arm anymore,” he giggled, and Kris felt his heart melting. How can he be so cute and so sexy at the same time?

Kris snorted. “Well I’m enjoying my Adam-cocoon right now. Besides, I can’t seem to move unless you do first.”

“Mmm, I kind of like that, my little rabbit,” Adam breathed into his ear.

“Rabbit, huh?” Kris smirked, trying not to be turned on, “is that a challenge?”

“Maybe, although I have to admit that you’re a very feisty rabbit. And I like my men with a little spunk…I mean…” Adam’s voice lost its playful tone and he fell silent.

“What’s the matter?”

“You’re not going to be able to come here every night I work, are you?” It was more of a statement than a question. He pried them apart, cum smeared and sticking everywhere, and started to get dressed, looking upset.

Oh god, I don’t know if I could handle it if that happened again, especially now. “Of course I can. Even when I have school I’m done by nine. I can get here just before your set ends. Do you…do you need me to?”

Adam nodded, eyes solemn. “I wish I didn’t. Not that I don’t want you, like, all the time anyway, but…” Suddenly he jumped up and started pacing angrily. “Fuck! I hate this!” He kicked at the
blanket, pulled Kris up roughly by the arms and kissed him, hard.

Kris let himself be kissed briefly and then drew back. “What’s going on?”

“I can’t do this…I’m sorry, Kris, I thought I could but it’s too fucking hard!” Adam said loudly and resumed his pacing.

Kris felt his a very familiar ache beginning to pierce his heart. No! I’m not going to stand by and let this happen. I won’t. Still naked, he stood up and walked into Adam’s path. “Stop. Look at me.”

Adam came to a halt, fists clenched and teeth grinding.

“What do you want?”

“You! I want you!” he yelled.

“You have me. What’s so hard about that?”

“Because I don’t want to need you! I don’t need anybody!” He grabbed up his blanket and started for the door, dragging it behind him.

NO! Kris dashed to the door and stood in front of it with his arms crossed.

“Get out of my way, Kris.” Adam’s voice was low and hard now, his face a mask of anger.

“No.”

“I’m not fucking around! Move!” he said, voice rising again.

“Make me. I’m not giving up on you this easily.”

“Oh yeah? What if I want you to?”

Okay that stung, but he’s in pain…he doesn’t mean it. “You don’t.”

“How the fuck do you know what I want?” he argued, now two feet away from Kris.

“Because, you beautiful idiot, you just told me that you wanted me,” Kris said, smiling, and reached out to stroke his face.

Adam’s eyes went wide and he sucked in a sharp breath. He dropped his blanket and ran his fingers through his hair. “I’m sorry. Shit. I told you, I warned you that I’m totally clueless about this…this…I’m just messed up,” he said, looking completely miserable all of a sudden.

“I wouldn’t have you any other way,” said Kris softly, and pulled Adam by the hips until their foreheads were touching. He gazed into Adam’s eyes and placed a gentle kiss on his lips.

“Don’t leave me,” Adam said with a tiny voice.

“I won’t,” Kris whispered.

They kissed again, slowly and tenderly this time. The minutes passed quietly and the only sounds were their lips and tongues touching, exploring, and tasting each other.

After a while, Kris began to shiver in his nakedness. Adam bent down and picked up the blanket, wrapped it around both of them and hugged Kris to his body.
Chapter 14

“You have a boyfriend now,” Adam said to himself in the mirror, “so that means no more fucking around.” He ruffled up the back of his hair and pulled a few strands into place. They’ll just have to learn to deal with it. His eyes creased with worry. But what if it costs me my job? Adam had seen the less than happy look on the face of the club owner last night; the man counted on him to bring in the audience…you mean the men. He was sure that the news that he had taken Kris to the back room three nights in a row had traveled right to the top.

Yes, even if I lose my job. I’m a damn good singer…I can find another one. But was that true? He looked deeply into his own eyes. Maybe I’m only good for sex. Adam knew that this line of thinking was irrational. Alisan, his family, previous employers…all of them had praised his talent and even he knew he was good, but the past year had just seemed to reinforce his secret fear that he had only one special skill to offer the world: a good fuck.

Before he had worked at the club, Adam had jumped from one odd job to another while performing on the side and had fed his sex addiction by picking up guys at random bars and clubs. How did it end up like this? He tried to remember the day he’d realized that he could work and get his fixes at the same place. Goddamn owner hinted at it, didn’t he, the fucker knew it was a golden opportunity after he saw me do it the first few times, and how quickly the word spread about me. He sighed and continued to apply his eyeliner. “Stop thinking about this,” he said to his reflection, “it’s not helping.”

Adam was nervous about his date with Kris tonight. It was Monday, so they had planned for a late dinner since Kris had school until nine. It seemed ridiculous to be nervous at this point, but Adam knew that in the absence of sex, there would be a lot of talking and it would probably get personal. What’s the big deal? But he knew the answer. Personal questions were dangerous in many ways: it made the other guy more real and it allowed other people to know Adam better, something that had only led to betrayal and pain in the past. Worst of all, it lured Adam’s brain into remembering things that were better left in the past.

He finished up his makeup and added a few sprays of Dior Homme to complete the package, wanting to impress even though he knew that Kris liked him for more than his outer appearance. Why, though? What does he see in me? Mystified, he shook his head and felt blessed that he’d been lucky enough to find a man like Kris. He thought of the tie and the necklace laying hidden in the box under his bed and grinned.

The restaurant was easy enough to find, a small Thai place set on a quiet street where there were always good specials. Adam parked and walked up to the door, smoothing down his shirt over his regular pants and fidgeting with his keys. There he is. Look at him…so gorgeous, sitting there and waiting for me, his boyfriend.

Kris saw him and stood up from the small booth. As Adam walked over, he suddenly wondered how he was supposed to greet Kris in this situation. A hug, a kiss…nothing? Christ, how old are you again? Fortunately, Kris did not seem to have the same problem and he walked right up to Adam and planted a wet kiss on his lips.

“Hi,” Kris said, eyes shining.

Adam beamed at him. “Hi, yourself.”
They sat down and stared at each other with dopey grins for a minute, Adam still playing with his keys under the table.

“I brought this for you,” Kris said, pulling a CD out of his coat pocket. "It’s a copy of my demo, and, well…” he trailed off uncertainly.

Adam took it, feeling a mixture of wariness and excitement. Very personal, and he’ll want to know what I think of it…but he’s so talented, that’ll be easy! “Wow thanks! That’s really…I mean I’m sure it’s incredible.”

“I can’t wait to hear what you think of it, especially since you’re such a gifted artist.”

Adam didn’t know what to say to that, so he picked up his menu and started perusing it. Fuck…why is sex so much easier than simple conversation? He remembered their first “date” at the sushi restaurant, which had started off awkwardly but turned out to be easy when Kris had started talking about himself. Adam decided to try that again after they ordered their food.

“So, uh, what’s it like in Arkansas?” he asked after their server left.

“Hmm…well the people are sweet where I grew up, but everyone knows you so you don’t have a lot of privacy.” He laughed, “hell, most of my neighbors knew I was gay before I did…of course they never said anything because they were either too shocked or too polite.”

Adam chuckled. He’s so adorable. “Tell me more.”

Kris went on about his hometown and how there was only a gas station to hang out at until they’d moved to Conway. He told a funny story about how his brother had slid down their banister and right out the door as his mom was bringing in groceries. A little later, he talked about his first real boyfriend in high school when things were awkward but sweet.

See? This isn’t so hard.

“…and well, that was the last of the good times for a while.”

“Why?” Adam asked, “What do you mean?”

Kris looked unhappy for the first time this evening. “Let’s just say I’ve had a fair share of heartbreaks over the years.”

“You? No way…why would anyone break your heart? Shit, you’re such a nice guy but you know what you want, and you’re drop dead sexy. A guy would have to be crazy not to want you.”

“I haven’t always known what I wanted, Adam…not until now anyway,” he said, staring hotly into Adam’s eyes.

He couldn’t help himself. “Why?”

Kris’ brow furrowed. “Why what?”

“Why do you want me, Kris?”

Kris smiled, reached over the table and took Adam’s hands in his. “Because you’re like a beautiful, happy child who giggles and a strong sexy man who can drown me with one look. Because you sing like an angel. Because your freckles drive me insane with desire. Because you tied me up and fucked me inside out. Because you shared your blanket with me. Because you’re scared and you’re here
anyway.”

Adam felt his eyes grow wider and wider as Kris spoke. *Oh my god…oh fuck…* He wanted to run away screaming and pounce on Kris at the same time.

Kris pulled at Adam’s hands until their lips were an inch apart. “Because you make me know what I want.”

Adam’s breath caught in his throat and he closed the gap between their lips with enough force that he had to grab Kris’ shoulders to keep him from falling away.

“Ahem. Gentlemen…your food,” said the server.

“ Damn,” Adam mumbled against Kris’ mouth.

Kris chuckled and pulled away. “ Seriously, kissing you is so much better than Pad Thai.”

The man set down their plates and left.

“If this keeps up, I’m going to start bringing a ‘do not disturb’ sign with me when we go out,” Adam complained.

“I dare you to,” Kris laughed, starting in on his food.

“Is that so?” A sly smile played on Adam’s lips. “I’d be careful if I were you. I never back down from a dare.” He waggled his eyebrows.

“Oh yeah?” Kris countered with a wicked smile of his own. “Well then I dare you to kiss me again, with lots of tongue, and say my name loud enough for the table across the room to hear it.”

*Oh he is so asking for it. Feisty rabbit.* “Fine.” Adam got up, went around to the other side of the booth and slid in next to Kris. He lost no time in kissing him fervently but also reached beneath the table and started rubbing Kris’ cock firmly through his khaki pants. Then Adam stopped kissing him and concentrated on making Kris come right here. Kris let out a husky moan; his head fell forward and he closed his eyes.

Adam didn’t care who was watching. He wanted the whole damned restaurant to know that Kris belonged to him. He angled his hand and quickened the pace while stealthily moving his other hand behind Kris’ ass without touching it. Kris was panting now, both hands clenched into fists on the table. Adam waited until he saw Kris’ body begin to seize and then he ran a finger right up the crack of his ass.

“Adam!” Kris shouted with an accompanying loud bang as his knees hit the underside of the table.

All the heads in the restaurant whipped around and looked at them with shocked and amused faces. Oh…you play…dirty…you sexy…you evil…” Kris managed to say in between hitching breaths.

Adam snickered, pecked him on the cheek and returned to the other side of the booth. “I warned you,” he said smugly and picked up his fork. “Mmm, I do love eating out.”

Kris glared at him playfully, but the effect was lost because he was squirming around on his seat. “Excuse me while I go clean up the mess my boyfriend made,” he said, and hobbled to the bathroom amid stares and laughs.

*I could get used to this.*
Kris came back looking more put together. “Somehow I’m gonna figure out how to repay you for that hot little trick,” he said fondly, returning to his meal.

“Can’t wait to see you try,” Adam threw back with equal affection.

Kris chortled and continued eating. “So,” he began after taking a few bites, “we’ve spent the whole night talking about me and getting me all hot and bothered. Let’s talk about you.”

Adam groaned inwardly. You knew this would happen…suck it up, Lambert.

“What do you want to know?” he asked Kris hesitantly.

“Anything and everything,” Kris replied seriously, “but let’s start with how you got into singing.”

Shit. To anyone else, this would have been a harmless question, but for Adam, it was fraught with dangerous memories of high school. He would just have to skip over that, force himself to concentrate on the times before all of that happened. “Well I probably came out of my mother’s womb singing,” he said, trying to keep things light. “I was always listening to music, playing dress up and wailing at the top of my lungs as a kid. My parents encouraged me, got me into musical theater and lessons and stuff.” That should be enough.

“Musical theater?”

Fuck, I should have left that part out.

“Yeah,” Adam said causally, “you know, community theater mostly.”

“I bet you were great at it!” Kris exclaimed.

“I was okay. I got some good parts.”

“Don’t be so modest. With talent like yours, I’m sure you stole the show every time. I bet you even did theater in high school, too. Probably blew their minds. Me? I was just some boring kid playing the viola in the orchestra pit. Adam?”

Don’t think about it…don’t think about it…remember what Sheila always told you and just try to concentrate on something else. Look at that cute guy over there staring at you. He’s got a sexy smile.

“Are you okay?” Kris turned around in the direction Adam was staring and saw a man throw a flirtatious grin at their table. He turned back to Adam and studied him. “Did I say something wrong? You look terrified. Oh shit… I said something, didn’t I?”

You gotta get out of here. Make up some excuse and leave, go home. No! Coward! Pathetic sniveling baby! Be a man... he didn’t mean anything by it... he doesn’t know about that part. “It’s… it’s okay,” he gritted out and breathed into his belly, trying to fight the intense urge to run or go fuck someone, anyone.

Kris looked horrified with himself. “Oh my god, I’m so sorry. Whatever it was…”

“Forget it, Kris, can we just get out of here?” FUCK. I fucking hate this! I want to go home but I want to be with Kris. I can’t…shit! This is so confusing…what the fuck am I supposed to do?

“Absolutely.” Kris jumped up and hurried off to take care of the bill. He came back quickly and took Adam’s hand. “Come on.” He led them outside into the fresh air and Adam took some more deep
breaths. “Where do you want to go?”

“Fuck,” he said shakily, “I don’t know… I don’t know.”

“Let’s just walk then for a bit, okay?”

Why is he talking to me like that? “I’m not a baby, Kris, I can take care of myself you know!” he snapped.

“I’m just trying to help,” Kris said softly, looking hurt now.

Stop freaking out or he’s going to leave you! Stop it! He’s just worried about you! And he shouldn’t have to be worried… grow the fuck up already! This shit happened years ago… HANDLE IT, Lambert! Adam squeezed his eyes shut, shook himself, and tried to make his voice calm. “I know you are. Okay, fine… let’s walk.”

This is exactly the sort of thing that had happened when Adam had tried to date again after two years of therapy. Plus he’d had regular flashbacks, nightmares and terrible mood swings back then that most guys just couldn’t handle, and Adam hadn’t cared enough to try to work things out with them. Running and fucking… always running and fucking.

They walked in silence until Adam felt calm enough to take Kris’s hand. He smiled sheepishly at Kris. “I’m sorry.”

Kris stopped them on a street corner. “Look, I know this isn’t going to be a piece of cake for either of us, but I’m in it for the long haul now and… I know in my heart that you’re worth it. Just don’t run out on me, okay?”

He’s a fucking saint. You don’t even deserve a guy like him. “Okay.” Now you give him something. That’s how it works, right? “Kris, I really want you to come to my apartment and I’m almost there. I just need a little more time.”

“Thank you. I really needed to hear that,” Kris said, smiling happily.

They stood on the corner and kissed for a while, arms wrapped tightly around each other. The autumn wind started to pick up and they pressed their bodies closer.

Adam felt the warmth of Kris against him and thought about how much he loved this time of year. “Hey!” he said suddenly with excitement, “I just remembered that this weekend is Halloween!”

“You’re babbling, gorgeous,” Kris said, putting a finger to Adam’s lips, “and I wouldn’t miss it for the world,” he continued, and replaced his finger with his mouth.

Chapter 15
“Hello?”

_God I love the sound of his voice._ “Hi, gorgeous.” Kris shifted the phone to his other ear as he opened the fridge.

“Well hello my little rabbit! To what do I owe the pleasure of your sexy voice on this fine Thursday evening?” Adam replied cheerfully.

“I miss you. I mean we just saw each other last night, but…” Kris smiled, thinking about their most recent adventure at the club.

“I miss you, too, boyfriend. Tell me again why we decided not to see each other until tomorrow night?”

“Umm, you said something about having to see your mom tonight.”

“Oh right, yeah I do,” said Adam. Kris could almost hear his pout. “So, you got your costume all ready for Saturday?”

“No, not yet.”

“You’re kidding! Kris, you’ve only got two days! What’s the holdup?”

_I hope this doesn’t sound too weird._ “Well I was wondering if I could maybe get Alisan’s phone number? I thought she might be able to help me with one.”

“I could help you, I’ve got tons of experience with costumes. Mmm, the idea of dressing you up is so hot.”

“But I want it to be a surprise for you,” he said feeling kind of shy. Kris hadn’t dressed up for Halloween since he was a kid and had no idea what to be. Something sexy but not too risqué since he was going to meet Adam’s family.

“A surprise for me?” Adam said with glee. “Oh my god I can’t wait! This is going to be so much fun! Ali is going to love helping you I just know it! Okay, here’s her number, you ready?”

Kris chuckled at Adam’s childlike enthusiasm, wondering how many people got to witness it. “I’m ready.” He took it down on a scrap of paper and hung it on the fridge next to Adam’s number. The surface was fast becoming crowded with more notes than the green ‘K’ could hold.

“So how about later tonight we do a repeat of Tuesday?” Adam said, suddenly switching to a seductive voice.

Kris shivered. _How does he do that?_ The night after their date at the Thai restaurant, he and Adam had such hot phone sex that Matt ended up yelling at him to shut up from the living room. Kris figured that Adam had never had phone sex before because he didn’t date, but he was a natural and Kris was eager to do it again. “You’re on. What time?”

“How about ten?

Kris looked at the clock on the microwave: 6pm. “Sounds perfect. Time enough to eat and catch the first half of the game.” __And Matt can just turn the volume up this time._

“I can’t believe you watch that shit.”
“Come on, it’s a great sport, plus…all those muscled men in skin tight pants, slapping each other’s asses all the time? Why do you think I started watching it in the first place?” he laughed.

“Good point.” Adam conceded.

Kris could tell that Adam was getting more comfortable with casual conversation and it made him happy, although they were careful to avoid any talk about high school or theater. He still didn’t know how that tied into the horrors of his past, but he felt sure that Adam would tell him someday.

“Okay, well I gotta go meet my mom, but I’ll call you later, sexy.”

“Can’t wait, beautiful.” They hadn’t settled on pet names yet, but it was fun to try them all out. They hung up and Kris resumed his search for dinner. “Matt, what the hell is this foil wrapped thing? It’s been in here for ages!”

“Dunno man, probably some leftover lunch from way back…you can toss it,” Matt replied from the living room. “So, was that lover boy on the phone?”

Kris joined Matt on the couch a minute later with a plate of cold pizza. “Yep. I got Alisan’s phone number so she can help me with my costume tomorrow.”

Matt chuckled. “You know, I wasn’t sure about this guy at first, what with all the drama and everything, but you seem really happy.”

“I am.”

“So when do I get to officially meet him?”

_Huh. Probably not for a while because apparently I’m the only man on the planet that Adam spends any real time with besides his brother._ “Um, I’m not really sure, but I’ll let you know.”

Matt huffed. “So what is your costume going to be anyway?”

“No idea. I was thinking maybe a fairy.” They looked at each other for a second and then burst into laughter, but then the pre-game commentary came on and they settled in to watch the game. At halftime Kris called Alisan, feeling a bit nervous. Adam had been right though; she was completed elated to come and help him tomorrow, but she was shocked that he’d waited until practically the last minute and hoped they could get him ready in time for Saturday. She was also surprised that Adam wanted Kris to meet his family so soon in their relationship.

It was 9:45 and Kris kept checking the clock every minute or so. Matt looked at him suspiciously. “Oh no, he’s going to call you and you guys are gonna…dude, I seriously cannot handle hearing those noises come out of your mouth again.”

“Then turn the volume up, because your delicate ears are so not coming in between me and my man.” Kris winked at Matt and went into his bedroom to wait. He played with his half of the tie, wrapping it around his wrists and remembering their first night together. This had become something of a habit for Kris; it made him sentimental and horny at the same time. His phone finally rang and he answered immediately.

“Hi.”

“Hey my sexy rabbit,” Adam purred.

Kris felt his dick respond at the mere sound of that voice. “How’s your mom?”
“We’re not going to talk about that now. We’re talking about something I’ve been fantasizing about doing to you.”

“Are we? I like the sound of that.”

“Lay down,” Adam commanded.

“I am.” Kris was on his back on the bed.

“Tell me what you’re wearing.”

“Those black pajama pants that you seem to like…and nothing else.”

“Mmm, I can see you right now...so sexy for me. Touch yourself...touch that beautiful cock of yours nice and slow.”

Kris began to rub the crotch of his pants in slow circles.

“Close your eyes, Kris. Imagine that I’m there next to you on that bed, that it’s my hand touching you right now,” Adam said softly.

Kris could easily envision this because he had done so almost every night since he met Adam.

“I’m leaning down between your legs now and you can feel my hot breath on you.”

Holy shit. If this is going where I think it’s going, Matt should probably just leave. Adam had never given Kris head. He understood why because of Adam’s past, and he had resigned himself to the fact that he might never feel those freckled lips around him. Maybe this is a sign that he’s ready. Just thinking about the possibility made him instantly hard and he moaned softly.

“That’s right, feel my mouth on your cock, warm and damp. My hands are on your hips now, tugging down your pants.”

Kris held the phone between his shoulder and his ear and pulled off the pajama pants.

“I’m about to put that tasty dick right into my mouth,” Adam went on, “my tongue is inches away from it,” he teased.

Kris slicked his length with pre-cum as he stroked himself, imagining Adam between his legs.

“Yes...do it Adam...I want to feel you,” he groaned huskily.

“Feel me, baby, feel my lips around your cock, my tongue running up and down it as I suck...” Adam’s voice was getting breathy now.

“Adam...yesss!” Suddenly Kris heard the loud cheering of a football game in the background.

“Your wet cock is sliding in and out of my mouth...in and out...in and out...”

Kris moaned loudly and sped up his hand. He could see it; Adam’s head bobbing up and down, those full lips stretched tight around his hard cock.

“Faster...harder...” Adam panted, “you’re fucking my mouth now and I’m pulling you in...”

“Adam! Adam!” Kris cried out, furiously pumping his dick.

“You’re...so close now...you’re going to come right down my throat...”
“Yes, yes, yes…….fuck!” Kris shouted.

“That hot cum is slipping down my throat…I’m sucking you dry, Kris,” Adam said hoarsely.

Kris squeezed his eyes and shuddered, imagining Adam milking him as his cum spurted all over his hand and stomach.

There was only heavy breathing on the other end of the phone and then… “Oh… oh… oh god!”

The sound of Adam coming made Kris’ cock twitch even as it finished spending its load.

“That was so fucking hot,” Adam said, still panting.

“Ridiculously hot,” Kris breathed, chest heaving. His phone was slick with sweat in his hand. He could still hear the game commentator’s voice announcing the plays from the living room. Kris’ heart rate began to slow but he didn’t move, he just lay there listening to Adam breathe. “Adam…that was so incredible. Would you ever…” You shouldn’t ask him that.

“I want to, Kris. I’m working up to it.”

“Wow,” was all he could think of to say.

“Think you could handle it?” Adam taunted.

“It would probably kill me, but I’d go to heaven a happy, happy man,” Kris chuckled and then yawned.

“Sleepy already?”

“You wore me out without even being here. You have magic sex powers, what can I say?”

Adam laughed. “So did you call Ali?”

“Yup. She’s coming over tomorrow to help me. She’s really excited. Adam…” Kris hesitated. Just ask him. “…are you sure about all this? I mean even Alisan was surprised that you wanted me to meet your family so soon.”

Adam didn’t respond right away. Crap…I shouldn’t have said anything.

“You know what, I’m not really sure about it, but I want to do it anyway.”

Wow, now that is a surprise. “Really?”

“Yeah. I…you…fuck,” Adam sighed heavily. “You mean a lot to me,” he rushed out.

Kris felt his throat tighten up and his eyes begin to water.

“Kris?” Adam said sounding worried.

“I’m here, Adam. I just…thank you. You mean so much to me, too,” he said with a sniff.

Adam cleared his throat. “Okay, enough of this sappiness. I’ve got jizz all over me and I need a shower. Have fun with Ali tomorrow and I’ll see you after my set.”

“Okay, baby…g’night,” Kris said, wiping his eyes and stifling another yawn.

“Night, gorgeous.”
Kris ended the call, pulled up his pants and dragged his ass to the bathroom in the hallway. “You can turn that down now,” he called loudly to Matt on his way.

***

Alisan came over at ten the next day lugging a huge suitcase and carrying a large plastic box. She set everything down and gave him a hug.

“Wow, are you sure we need all that?” Kris asked, staring at the luggage.

“Oh you bet. We’ll probably even need to go out and get some more stuff.”

“Umm, right…I’ll just leave it you, Alisan.”

“Call me Ali,” she said smiling.

Kris returned the smile. “Okay, I have to tell you that I’m a little worried, Ali. I mean, has Adam ever done this before?”

“Brought anyone home? No. Well, there were a few guys he dated in his junior year that his parents met, but they weren’t really serious.” She looked at him with concern. “You’re really special to him, you know, and he’s trying so hard…but I don’t think he realizes how difficult it might be to let you in so quickly.”

“I think he does. He said he wasn’t so sure about it, but he wanted to do it anyway. He said…he told me that I mean a lot to him,” Kris told her.

“Did he? Well then, maybe I’m not giving him enough credit.”

Then Kris voiced something that had been on his mind ever since Monday. “Don’t you think it’s a bigger deal for me to meet his family than for me to be in his apartment?”

Alisan looked at him kindly. “For someone else maybe, but to Adam, that apartment is his sanctuary, his safe haven. He has complete control over it and who is allowed in it. It’s about trust…it would be like letting you in to his life completely.

So when he said he was almost ready to let me in his apartment…and he’s been bringing his bed blanket to the club room every time now… it must mean that he’s letting me in, just slowly.

“I think it will happen eventually for you,” she continued and patted his hand, “but when it does you can be sure that Adam will have carefully planned it all out, not like last time. You know that was unintended, right?” she asked sympathetically.

“I do. Thank you for talking to me about this. I really appreciate it.”

“Your welcome, and just so you know, Adam has given me permission to talk to you about some of this stuff, and that is something you should really appreciate since he is such a private person.”

Kris nodded and he hugged her in thanks.

She hugged him back and then clapped her hands together, all business. “Okay, so do you have any ideas about what you want to be?”
“Not really. I don’t want it to be too crazy though since it’s a family party.”

“Oh my lord honey, you are in for a surprise. Adam’s mom will probably be showing more skin than I plan to,” she laughed. “They’re all very relaxed.”

“Ali, do they all know about what happened to Adam?” Kris asked seriously.

“Yes, they do…they’re a very tight bunch. Of course not everyone knows all the details, but they all know that Adam doesn’t date, so be prepared for some shocked faces tomorrow.”

“What? You mean none of them know I’m coming?”

“Well, he might have told his parents and his brother, but Adam is really different around his family - - a lot more like the kid he used to be, and I think he’ll probably find it really funny to surprise them with you.”

Great. That’s just great. I’m meeting Adam’s family for the first time at a Halloween party and I’m the surprise guest.

“Anyhow,” Alisan continued, “I assume that you’ll be club hopping with Adam and Neil afterwards so you need something really sexy.”

“Something that you think Adam will like,” said Kris. Something that will make him want to tear it off later.

“I’m sure he’ll like anything on you, but if you really want to get him all hot and bothered…” She opened the suitcase and pulled out a pair of large, dark red wings.

Oh my god. She has got to be kidding me.

“Are you serious? You want me to wear…wings? I mean, I know I’m a fairy and all, but…”

Alisan chuckled. “An angel, Kris, you’re going to be an angel, a dark, sexy angel.”

Wait a minute, she brought those wings with her.

“You had this all planned out, didn’t you?” he said suspiciously.

“Well I gave you a chance to say what you wanted, and you did ask for my help and I just know Adam will go crazy when he sees you in them. Oh come on, Kris, it’ll be amazing!”

She’s his best friend and she knows his family. God, if Matt ever finds out, I’ll never hear the end of it.

“Oh come on, Kris, it’ll be amazing!”

She clapped her hands together in excitement. “Excellent! Okay, what we need to do is go out and get you a pair of leather pants, unless you already own some?”

“Leather?” It’s going to be a long day.

It took two hours of shopping before Alisan finally found what she was looking for: a pair of tight leather pants that rode so low that Kris was worried they’d fall off. They do show me off nicely though. He could just imagine Adam’s face and then he started to get more excited about the whole thing. They also stopped and found a pair of black boots before they went back to his apartment.

“Okay, now we need to experiment with your hair, some makeup and accessories,” said Alisan.

They worked all afternoon until they were satisfied, both thinking that Kris would be lucky to last ten minutes without Adam pouncing on him and dragging him off somewhere.
“Ali, we’ve got to clean this all up!” he said with a yelp at five o’clock, motioning at the products, makeup and accessories spread out all over the room. “Matt’s going to be home from work soon!” Never, I would never live it down.

“Okay, okay,” she said, laughing at him. They packed up the suitcase and box, and Alisan promised to be back the next day at four to help him get ready for the party.

There were still several hours before he had to be at the club. Kris took a quick shower and curled up on the couch with his guitar. He strummed a simple melody and thought about Adam, how amazing he was and how lucky he felt to be with such a man. Sure, Adam had a lot of issues and Kris knew for certain that the path before them would be rocky, but it was obvious that Adam was also kind, talented, smart and funny in addition to being an outstanding lover. Kris didn’t see himself as a rescuer; it was clear to him that Adam was making a lot of efforts on his own and was doing his best to give back to Kris. He wondered if Adam was in therapy and if it was helping him be so brave.

He hoped all of this didn’t end up being more than Adam could handle. Even though it had only been a month since they’d met, Kris knew that he was falling hard for Adam. There was nothing he could do to stop it and he was sure that his heart wouldn’t recover for a long, long time if he lost Adam.

Kris got to the club just in time to see Adam walk on to the stage. After the first few nights, he learned that he didn’t have to fight to get to the stage because Adam always made a beeline for him no matter where he was. The other men treated him with disdain for ruining their chances, but they continued to call Adam’s name and throw those notes on stage in the hope that he would choose them instead of Kris for once.

Adam had his hair swept back tonight and it showed off his brilliant blue eyes. Look at him, so incredible up there singing his heart out. He really should be doing more than this and he deserves a better crowd, people who really appreciate his talent and not just his dick. I wonder if he’s ever recorded anything. He listened attentively and ignored the angry stares from the men around him.

As usual, Adam made straight for him at the end of the show. “Hi, sexy.”

“Hey, babe,” said Kris. Neither of them bothered to keep their voices down anymore, both wanting everyone to know that they were together now. They ignored the bids for Adam’s attention and parted the audience before them as they walked to ‘their’ room. Kris let out a tiny gasp when Adam unlocked the door and swung it open because there, in the middle of the room was not only Adam’s blanket, but also two pillows. Kris schooled his features. Don’t want to scare him away.

Adam turned and smiled at him. “I brought these down earlier…thought we’d more comfortable this way.”

“Thank you,” he said sincerely and smiled back widely. Adam locked the door behind them and then embraced Kris in a full body hug before tilting his head down to kiss him. Kris thought about the last time they were in this room and how their fucking had been less frantic, as though Adam was realizing that they had all the time in the world now instead of the few minutes he was used to with men.

Adam walked them towards the blanket without breaking the kiss while Kris unhooked his sex pants with a practiced hand. They went down to their knees, lips still locked together and hands in each other’s hair. Kris pulled up the hem of Adam’s shirt but stopped when Adam grabbed his hand and drew back. “Is something wrong?” he asked.

“No, I just want to go first,” Adam said with a smirk and began undressing Kris until he was only in
his cotton briefs. He pushed Kris down onto the blanket so his head rested on a pillow and kissed him again. He graced his tongue along the roof of Kris’ mouth and then bit down on his lower lip. Kris drew in a sharp breath and tried to pull Adam on top of him, but Adam straightened up and shot him an evil grin. “Not yet, my little rabbit, I’m going to make you beg for it,” he said, and licked a long path from Kris’ nipple to his ear then went back down his neck to the other nipple.

Kris groaned and said, “You’re going to kill me. I’m not going to survive your tongue all over me.”

“Better start trying, gorgeous, because I’m not stopping until you can’t stand it anymore.” And with that, he set about slowly licking and nibbling every inch of Kris’ body that wasn’t covered. Kris writhed and shuddered under Adam’s attentive mouth. He licked closer and closer to Kris’ briefs until his mouth was hovering inches from Kris’ cloth-covered, rigid cock. Oh my god, is he really going to…

Kris fisted his hands into the blanket to keep from grabbing Adam’s head. Adam looked up at him, smiled, and then tongued the cotton once. Kris’ breath hitched and he moaned and licked his lips. Adam grasped the elastic band of the briefs and pulled them down a few inches to reveal the head of Kris’ leaking cock. Kris couldn’t help the small whimper that escaped his lips.

“All right, baby?” Adam whispered.

Kris gave a small sob in response. Please oh please oh please…

Adam continued pulling down Kris’ underwear until it was all the way off. He looked at Kris’ naked form and then resumed licking him, this time all around his torso. Kris was shivering from the drying wetness all over his body and his moans were half desperate cries. His nipples were hard nubs and his dick was aching, aching, longing for Adam’s mouth. Abruptly Adam stopped his tongue right near the base of Kris’ length. Then he gave it a quick swipe, kissed it on the head and drew back.

Kris couldn’t help it, he was nearly crying now, “please, baby…please.”

Slowly, tortuously, Adam leaned back down and placed his lips on the head of Kris’ cock. He kissed it a few times and then tentatively lowered his mouth around it and back off again. Kris clamped his eyes shut as if he were in pain; he was visibly shaking now, knuckles white with the strain of his grip on the blanket. Suddenly Adam went all the way down on him, swirled his tongue and pulled back off quickly. Kris nearly came right then. He felt a strong hand encircle him and stroke him twice before he lost it altogether and came. “Adam…Adam…” he sobbed.

Adam crawled up him and kissed his crying mouth silent. Kris could taste a small hint of himself on Adam’s tongue and it drove him crazy with want. He pulled at Adam’s shirt and this time he was allowed to take it off. Adam stood up and stripped off his pants, then lay back on top of Kris, who instantly wrapped his legs around him and kissed him feverishly. “I need you…need you, please…please,” he begged in between kisses.

Adam grabbed a condom and the little bottle of lube from his pants and prepared himself. “Going to make your head spin, sexy boyfriend.” He picked up one of the pillows and arranged it under Kris’ ass, then lifted Kris’ right leg over his shoulder and placed a hand on either side of Kris’ waist on the floor.

“Yes…I’m ready, just please take me…please…” Kris pleaded again. When Adam finally pushed in, the angle was perfect and his cock brushed against Kris’ prostate with every thrust. He went painfully slow at first, as if he wanted to draw out Kris’ torture, but then took a little pity on him and moved into a steady rhythm.
“Let me hear you, baby,” Adam growled and locked eyes with Kris.  

Kris couldn’t form any words except “Adam” amidst moans and whimpered sounds that seemed to go on forever as Adam’s stamina proved itself. When he couldn’t take it anymore, Kris took his cock in hand and pumped it in time to the measured thrusts. “Faster…please…faster…harder…more…”  

“Oh I don’t know, I’m not sure you want it badly enough yet,” Adam teased and carried on with his even, steady movements.  

“Fuck! I’m begging you…please!” Kris cried, tears springing to his eyes.  

Finally Adam showed mercy and sped up into a dizzying pace, pounding relentlessly into Kris and moaning loudly until they reached their climax together, crying out the other’s name.  

Adam fell on top of Kris and they held each other tightly for a while, catching their breath and whispering little words like “baby” and “so good.” Adam rolled them onto their sides, pulled the blanket over them and kissed the back of Kris’ neck. Kris felt the heat of Adam’s body throughout his whole being. I love him.  

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Falling slowly, eyes that know me  

And I can’t go back  

Kris set down his guitar and walked to Matt’s room. He knocked and called, “Hey man, you up yet?”  

A muffled “go away” came from behind the door.  

“Come on, I need to ask you a favor…open up.” Kris heard a groan and a curse and then the door swung open.  

“Shit…it’s ten o’clock on a Saturday, this had better be good.”  

“Well, see, Ali is coming over today at four to help me get ready, and I…well I know the game is on then and I wondered if maybe you could watch it somewhere else?”  

Matt looked at him grumpily. “And this couldn’t have waited until I was conscious?”  

“I wanted to give you time to make other plans, you know, trying to be thoughtful here.” Matt rolled his eyes and shut the door. “So is that a yes?” Kris called.
“Yes, you dork, now go away.”

Kris went back to his room. He’d been up since seven, alternately pacing, playing his guitar, checking the time and re-reading the notes about his demo album for the professor. But none of this helped, and he knew he was going to have to find better ways to distract himself until Alisan arrived. It’s just a costume party…no reason to be so nervous. He picked up the notes again.

Kris, your demo is excellent. Your overall sound is very clean and the melodies are intricate without being showy. I think that you could be marketable as a singer-songwriter like John Mayer before he went blues. The major criticism I have is that you come across as less than confident on some of the tracks. I took the liberty of detailing some notes on each song and I hope you find them helpful. I suggest you do a little reworking and then I’d be happy to see if I can get my friend over at Aware Records to give it a listen.

Kris had read this and the individual song notes at least five times already that morning. Less than confident…well that was before Adam. He couldn’t wait to get started on reworking the songs, but right now he couldn’t concentrate so he threw on some sweats and headed to the gym, hoping a good work out would release his nervous energy.

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“Ouch! Ali, that was my eyeball!” Kris yelled and rubbed at his watering eye.

“Well if you would sit still…” she said with a sigh. “You did all right yesterday.”

“I wasn’t nervous yesterday,” he said, and looked up to the ceiling so Alisan could try the eyeliner again.

She leaned in and held his eyelid with her thumb. “You’re going to be fine, don’t worry! Just try to relax and think about Adam’s face when he sees you tonight.”

Kris sighed dreamily, imagining the scene.

“That’s better…just stay like that, Kris.”

He tried to concentrate on not blinking and a question popped into his brain. “Does Adam go to therapy? I mean, well, you don’t have to answer that if it’s too personal.”

Alisan stepped back and put down the pencil. “It’s okay. He used to go, for years after the incident, but not anymore.”

“Why not?”

“Because he’s too stubborn. After he was functioning well enough on his own, he stopped going, but now…well he probably knows that she wouldn’t have approved of the way he was dealing with things. I wish he’d go back, but he’s so independent. He doesn’t like needing help.” She looked at him thoughtfully. “But to be perfectly honest, I don’t think he was willing to change until you came along.”

Kris tried to absorb the enormity of her statement. How could a regular guy like me inspire that kind of change in someone?
It was going on six-thirty and they were nearly done. Fifteen minutes later, Alisan stepped back to admire him. “Wow. Kris, you look incredibly hot. If you weren’t gay…” Kris chuckled and blushed. “Seriously,” she said, “go look at yourself in a full length mirror if you have one.”

He walked into his bedroom, being careful not to damage the wings going through the doorway, and moved in front of the mirror on his wall. “Holy shit.” He looked like an anime character come to life. The leather pants clung to his body, defining his leg muscles and ass, and they were tight enough to remind him of Adam’s sex pants that left nothing to the imagination in front.

His bare chest and arms seemed to glow with the help of a lightly tinted, shiny lotion Alisan had applied. The wings, secured to his back by a liberal amount of body glue, rose up above his shoulders and then fell gracefully down to his calves, outlining his entire body like a blood red picture frame. And his face…how did she do that? His eyes seemed more brown, wider and deeper, and around each eye she had created a black wing shape that stretched to his temples. Kris had tried to draw the line at lipstick, but Alisan had bullied him into it -- medium red covered lightly by black and outlined with a black pencil -- and he had to admit that the effect was stunning.

Finally, she had worked her magic on his hair, somehow managing to make it look like he’d just rolled around in bed with someone and been fucked silly. It was sticking up messily all over the place with a few strands falling into his face. He shook his head and not a single hair moved. I’m going to need three showers to get clean.

Alisan walked in and beamed at him. “I’m a genius,” she said. “Now for the finishing touches.” She snapped a black strap around his wrist. He examined it for a moment.

“Oh my god! Is that…Ali, is that a cock ring?” he exclaimed.

She giggled. “Well we are going for a sexy angel look here.”

“Jesus!” he laughed, “I’ll be lucky to make it out of there alive!”

“Oh okay I’m not done yet.” She held up two small bottles, one was full of something shiny and the other was a bottle of black nail polish.

“And that’s glitter, isn’t it?” he said with a groan. “Well, I’ve done this much. Lay it on me.”

At seven-thirty they left together for the party. Alisan had changed into her costume, a sexy kitten complete with catsuit, ears and a tail. “How on earth do you walk in those things?” Kris asked, pointing to her six-inch heels as they got in her car.

“A lots of practice and many years of Lambert family Halloween parties.”

The drive took about twenty minutes and Kris had to lean forward the whole time because of his wings. “Wow, big family,” he remarked at seeing all the cars parked around the house and down the street.

“You have no idea. This is a huge annual event and all the relatives come out of the woodwork for it.” She glanced over at Kris. “You’re going to be fine…I promise. I’d tell you to stick with me but I have a feeling Adam is going to want you all to himself,” she said with a grin.

They found a spot about a block away and walked to the house. The night air was chilly and Kris shivered, half naked and anxious. I can’t believe I’m doing this. His whole family…oh my god…and I’m wearing wings and a cock ring. I must have been crazy to agree to this.

When they got to the door, Alisan opened it and walked right in. She must be like part of the
family. They stood in the decorated entrance hall of a large and beautiful house and heard music coming from somewhere. Alisan took him by the arm and said, “You ready?”

“Yes.” No, not really, no way.

She winked and walked him to a set of wooden double doors. Kris took a deep breath. Alisan turned the handle and pushed open the doors. The room on the other side was packed with people in costumes laughing, talking and dancing to the thumping music. Suddenly, there was a collective intake of breath as they looked around and saw Kris and Alisan standing there. Then someone let out a loud wolf whistle. “Damn, Ali! Is that your date?”

“No,” a voice called from across the room, “he’s mine.” There was an outbreak of shocked mumbles as everyone looked at Adam.

And then Kris saw him. Holy fucking wow. Kris’ eyes bugged out and his pants felt impossibly tighter as he stared and stared at Adam. A vampire…the sexiest, hottest…Kris thought he might come in his pants from just looking at him. He was dressed entirely in black, but the clothes were intricate and fit every line and curve of his body. Tiny black and red gems were worked into a mesh see-through shirt that sparkled with every movement. Over the shirt was a leather jacket, which was detailed with complex stitching and rhinestones. The sleeves of the jacket came down to a point over the backs of his hands and looped around his middle fingers. His pants were leather as well but had criss-crossed openings up the entire outer side of each leg. He wore a silver collar around his neck and a ring on each finger.

There were streaks of blonde in his hair, which looked like it had extensions in it to make it fall into his face. His brows were arched high and blood red lips contrasted sharply with his paler than usual skin. Kris could just see the points of fangs protruding over his bottom lip. But it was Adam’s eyes that were wreaking havoc on Kris in that moment. Eyes that sparkled darkly somehow, rimmed with black and blue, eyes that were staring at Kris possessively, eyes screaming with lust that were demanding satisfaction…now.

The room was silent save for the music; people looked back and forth at them, waiting for something to happen. Then Adam was on the move and everyone stepped away from him as he walked purposefully across the room, taking off his fangs as he went. Kris felt Alisan leave his side. No one else existed in that moment but Adam…Adam…Adam. Adam stopped in front of Kris, looked him up and down once and pulled him into a long, fierce kiss right there in front of everyone. Okay I’m ready to go now…please take me away and destroy me with your sex.

The crowd whistled some more and they finally broke apart, panting. Adam threw Kris a get-ready-to-be-fucked look and then turned around to face the room. “Everyone, this is Kris, my boyfriend. Kris, meet my crazy family.”

Adam laughed loudly at their shocked expressions, but soon their gawping mouths turned into delighted smiles and called out congratulations like they were all at a wedding. They tried to pull Kris away and began to fight over who would get to talk to him first, but Adam came to his rescue. “In a minute, in a minute…I need a…private word with Kris and then I’ll bring him back, I promise.” They all laughed knowingly and let Kris go with Adam.

“A dark angel…holy mother of fuck, Ali gets ten pairs of new shoes for this, plus an extra pair for the cock ring!” Adam was dragging Kris through the house to god knows where and every once in a while he would stop and throw Kris to a wall to kiss and grope him.

“Want you so bad,” Kris panted, “where are we going?”
“Library,” he said and continued walking until they finally reached a room in the back corner of the house.

A minute later Kris was naked and flat on his back with his legs in the air on a large desk, wings digging into his shoulders and Adam balls-deep into his ass. Anyone passing by would have clearly heard the yells and moans coming from the room, but everyone was at the party on the other side of the house.

The library door opened after ten minutes and they came out, makeup smeared and Kris’ hair even more tousled. Kris wiped a shaking hand over his brow and silently thanked Alisan for using so much glue to secure the wings. They stood and kissed some more in the hallway until they figured they should probably get back to the party.

“Okay,” said Adam, “now everyone is going to want to get to know you and I’m perfectly fine with that, but I’m not leaving your side for an instant because it will keep them from telling embarrassing childhood stories about me. Plus…” he leered at Kris and grabbed his ass.

“I know,” said Kris, “I want to be at your disposal, too, as many times as we can manage in a night.”

They made their way back to the party, stopping to make out several times before they reached it. Some kind of agreement must have been made while they were gone because only two people approached Kris this time. They must be his parents.

“Leila,” said a scantily clad Cleopatra, and held out her hand. “It’s so good to meet you, Kris. Adam told us he was bringing someone tonight and obviously we were thrilled,” she smiled warmly.

“And I’m Eber,” said a man who was dressed as Marc Antony.

Kris shook both of their hands. “I feel a bit embarrassed to be meeting you as a half-naked angel, ma’am,” Kris said with a blush, “but thank you for the warm welcome. Your house is beautiful Mr. and Mrs. Lambert.”

“Oh, he’s so polite, Adam,” his mom exclaimed. “Please, honey, call me Leila and don’t worry about it…it’s a costume party and you look absolutely devastating.”

“He’s from the south mom, they grow them with manners down there,” Adam chuckled, “and lay off my man, he’s taken.”

“Where in the south are you from, Kris?” asked Eber.

“Arkansas, sir,” Kris replied.

He laughed genially. “Oh lord, please don’t call me sir, it makes me feel old. Eber will do just fine.”

“Adam tells us you’re a musician,” said Leila.

“Yes, ma’am, I mean Leila…I play the guitar.”

“And the viola, and the ukulele and he sings like…an angel,” Adam said, flashing a huge, pleased smile at Kris.

He’s proud of me? That is just too adorable. “I’m nowhere near as good as Adam at singing, he’s incredibly talented.”

Leila smiled. “Isn’t he though? I just wish he’d let us come watch him perform someti—”
“Hey hey hey! It’s the man of the hour!” called a bare-chested man who seemed to appear out of nowhere, wearing a plaid kilt and sash.

Adam looked intensely relieved to see the man; he pulled him into a side hug and smiled. “Kris, this is my brother Neil, and he does not look as hot as you do without a shirt on. Neil, please tell me you’re wearing something under that kilt?” Neil punched Adam in the ribs and held out his hand to Kris.

“Nice to meet you, Neil,” Kris said with a chuckle and shook his hand. *That looked like a rescue if I ever saw one. I bet his mom doesn’t know what Adam has been doing at the club.*

“So Kris, you’re coming out with us later on, right?” Neil asked.

“Apparently I am. Can’t say that I have much experience with club hopping though.”

Neil snorted. “Bro, you better keep a close watch on him otherwise he’ll get eaten alive out there.”

Adam clutched Kris to his side and gave his ass a firm squeeze.

“So boys, I hope you’re all planning to play games tonight,” said Leila. Adam gave Kris a knowing look and Eber and Neil laughed. “Adam! Not those kind of games,” she said, rolling her eyes, “save those for later. I mean party games!”

“Oooh, those are actually fun most of the time, Kris,” said Adam. “Are we playing spooky shot this year?”

*I love seeing him like this. He’s so relaxed and sociable! It’s almost like there are two Adams. I wonder if he’ll ever be this comfortable in public.*

“Definitely! And I think you’ll especially enjoy siamese twin relay this year,” Eber said with a wink to his son.

Just then, Alisan joined them. “Guys, the natives are getting restless. Everyone wants to talk to Kris and you’re hogging him.”

Leila sighed. “Oh all right. Don’t let him out of your sight, young man, or you’ll never get him back…he’ll get swamped by all of your aunts!”

Adam laughed and told her not to worry. As soon as they turned toward the crowd, Kris was in hot demand, but Adam kept his arm wrapped tightly around Kris’ waist. Kris smiled up at Adam. *I belong to him.* Everyone wanted to know where he was from, what the south was like and how he and Adam had met. Kris let Adam handle those questions and Adam just said that they’d met at a store one day and left it at that. On and on the relatives came and Kris could see that Adam was growing uncomfortable about certain questions being thrown at them.

“Excuse me, ma’am…Lorraine, is it? I need to go get a drink…all this talking. Adam, could you help me out?”

Adam nodded fervently and guided him swiftly away from aunt Lorraine.

“Where are you two headed off to? We’re about to start the games!” called Adam’s mom.

“We’ll be back in fifteen!” Adam yelled to her over his shoulder. They practically ran to the library this time.
When they returned, Alisan cornered Kris to reapply his lipstick and then adjusted his wings. “Whoo! You are getting a workout tonight,” she said with a giggle, “told you dark angel was a genius idea!”

Kris looked at her with sex-glazed eyes. “I love you,” he said dopily.

She slapped his face a few times. “Pull yourself together, Kris, the night is still young.”

Adam had been standing nearby waiting for Kris. “Your time is up, Ali,” he said, walking over, “give him back.”

Suddenly the music stopped and Eber’s loud voice boomed out, “The games are about to begin! In honor of my son’s guest, we’ll be starting out with the siamese twin relay.” The crowd laughed and Kris gave Adam a quizzical look, but he just waggled his eyebrows suggestively. Eber split everyone up into two teams and told them to pair up with someone on their team and form a line. Then he walked around to the pairs, put them back-to-back and told them to keep their arms linked together. When he got to Adam and Kris, he winked and said, “Now Kris, because of your wings, I think you and Adam should go front-to-front instead.” No complaints here. “Okay! Each pair do your best to reach your team’s the bucket at the end of the room and get back to the starting line without unlocking your arms! Whichever team gets the most candy out of the bucket wins!”

Adam and Kris stood in the middle of their line and wrapped their arms around each other eagerly. They couldn’t help but kiss as they waited for their turn. I can’t believe I’m kissing him like this in front of his family!

“Ahem!” someone called from the back of the line. “Lover boys, it’s your turn next!”

They looked up and smiled at each other. “I really feel like reading a good book after this game, Kris, don’t you?”

“Absolutely.” Best party ever.

They did a horrible job at the game because once they started walking, their groins kept rubbing up against each other and it was terribly distracting. Kris managed to grab two pieces of candy from the bucket and they laughed all the way back to the starting line. They got persuaded to play a silly game of pumpkin ring toss and then snuck out of the room.

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They ran with their hands entwined, giggling and drunk on lust and affection for each other. “And I used to think this room was boring!” Adam laughed when they reached the library. He pulled Kris inside and kicked the door closed. His giddy smile disappeared at once and he pinned Kris with a smoldering gaze. “Hmmmm, and just what am I going to do with you this time, my dark,” Adam stepped up to Kris, “sexy,” he backed him into a wall of books, “angel?”

Kris looked up at Adam like a wide-eyed baby deer for a moment, but then his eyes filled with fiery desire. He licked his lips, boldly grabbed Adam’s crotch and squeezed hard. “Surprise me,” he growled.

Adam caught his breath and narrowed his eyes at Kris. “Oh that is it. You are so asking for it!” He scanned the room for inspiration. Ah yes, perfect! That hot little punk, he won’t be able to walk
straight for days by the time I’m done with him! Three sides of the large room were lined with wall-to-wall bookshelves that reached almost to the ceiling. Adam yanked Kris over to the wall where the rolling ladder was currently resting on its track. It was beautiful, made of cherry wood with brass wheels and gold filigree worked up the sides. “Pants. Off. Now.”

Kris tore off his boots and leather pants and started to stroke himself.

“Oh no you don’t,” Adam said gruffly and slapped Kris’ hand away from his dick. “You just hop your sweet ass up onto this ladder,” he continued while checking to make sure the track and wheel locks were set.

“What? You want me to…”

“You heard me. Sit on this rung and face the shelves,” he said, pointing to a ladder step. Adam stood back with his hands on his hips, waiting. **Fuck, he’s so incredibly gorgeous. What did I do to deserve him?**

Kris saw that Adam was serious, climbed up and shimmied his naked body until he was sitting on the ladder with both feet on the shelf in front of him.

Adam positioned himself behind Kris and stroked his angel wings from top to bottom. “Mmm,” he purred and began rubbing his cock through his pants. “You’re mine…my pretty, pretty angel.”

Kris shivered, making glitter rain down onto the wooden floor. “Touch me, Adam, please.”

**Oh I’ll do more than that.** Adam stuck a hand in his back pocket and did a quick count of how many condoms were left for the night. **Six…should be plenty.** He whipped one out, pulled off his pants, boots and jacket and threw them on a nearby desk, leaving him naked except for the see-through mesh shirt. **Got to get him positioned right…if I just…there.** Adam had pulled Kris back so that his ass was hanging off of the rung. “Ohhh, baby, still open and wet for me I see,” he murmured with longing as he ran a finger between Kris’ cheeks.

“Adam,” Kris whimpered and clutched the ladder.

“Hold on tight, my little rabbit.” Without another word he pried Kris apart with both hands and plunged into him. Kris moaned from the back of his throat and his head fell forward. Adam gripped the ladder on either side and leaned his upper body back until his arms were straight, then began driving up into Kris deeply and grunting with every thrust. The friction was incredible. **So goddam tight!** Kris was squished into a tight space, and his ass molded around Adam’s cock. Adam’s vision was filled with dark red feathers and glittery brown hair as he pounded upwards. The ladder shook and rattled but held fast on its track.

Kris’ knuckles were turning white and he began to babble something like “fu-adam-plee-yes-oohhhhhhhhh!”

“So good…so…fucking…uh…uh…” Adam groaned and grunted. He bent his head forward and bit a wing feather, then another and another, as many as he could reach while continuing to fuck Kris mercilessly.

“Adam!” Kris let go of the ladder and grabbed on to a shelf in front of him, knocking several books onto the floor in the process. Then Adam gave a particularly vicious thrust and Kris swiped the entire shelf clean of books. “Fuck! Oh my god!” Kris started tugging at his dick furiously with one hand while hanging on for dear life with the other.

Adam pulled his body close to the ladder and wrapped his arms around it and Kris, burying his face
in the wings and pinning Kris to the ladder. He sped up his pace, thrusting so fast and hard that ladder was in danger of coming loose. “Oh…yes…yessssss…OH!” He clamped his eyes shut and little stars popped behind them as he came, wave after wave of pleasure coursing through his body.

Adam reached around and took over for Kris, two more strokes and Kris was yelling and shooting his cum all over the now empty bookshelf. He slumped forward and would have fallen to the ground if not for Adam’s arms holding him up. Gently, Adam lowered him down and caught him in a tight embrace. They stood there, panting and clinging to each other.

A loud ‘gong’ rang out and startled them. Adam looked over and saw the large, antique clock on the wall strike ten. “Can you move, baby?” he asked Kris.

Kris looked up at Adam, adoration clearly written in his eyes. He rose up to his toes, kissed Adam softly and said, “That was a good surprise.”

Adam chuckled, kissed him on the forehead and then they started to get dressed. Kris was done first, so he looked around for something to use on the shelf. He found an old cleaning cloth in the desk and wiped up his cum, then gingerly leaned down to gather up the fallen books. “Hey look,” he said with a laugh. Adam turned around and saw the book Kris was holding and burst into laughter. It was ‘Forbidden Nights with a Vampire.’

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When they emerged from the library for the third time that evening, Kris’ wings were definitely starting to look disheveled and he had a permanent grin on his face.

“Excellent!” cheered Adam, “we’re back just in time for spooky shot to start! I’ll let my dad explain.”

It turned out to be a simple drinking game where the punishment for saying a ‘taboo’ word was to drink a shot of alcohol. The taboo word for the night was ‘costume’. Kris thought that Adam would be very good at this since he was probably used to screening himself so much.

As the evening wore on, more relatives in varying states of inebriation tried to tempt Kris into conversation, but he was finding it difficult to focus. He was not good at filtering himself and had been told to drink a few shots. However, he’d been dead on about Adam, who had only said ‘costume’ once the whole evening and was still firmly clutching Kris’ waist, moving them away when the more intoxicated people lost their judgment and started asking questions about Kris and Adam’s relationship that were too personal.

Close to midnight, Neil found them and asked if they were ready to go. Before they left, Alisan took ten minutes and did a pretty good job at restoring Kris’ costume and makeup to its pre-sex state. He gave her an enormous bear hug. “Thank you so much, for everything.”

“Go have a blast. Adam, you take good care of this man, now, you hear me? Don’t let those crazy boys get their paws on him.”

“I won’t, Ali. Don’t worry, he’s safe with me.” Adam gave her a kiss on the cheek and then reattached his fangs. They were almost out the door when Kris insisted that he be allowed to say goodbye to Adam’s parents first.
“Such a gentleman,” said Leila after Adam had found his parents and led them over to Kris. “I hope you had a wonderful time, Kris. I’m so happy you came and I hope we get to see you again soon.”

“Have a good time, boys. Kris, it was a pleasure to meet you,” said Eber.

Kris shook their hands again and thanked them for their hospitality.

They hopped into a cab with Neil sitting in front. Adam leaned back against the inside of the back door and Kris draped his body all over him, wings up so they wouldn’t get squished. Neil gave up trying to talk to them after a while since all they were interested in was seeing how close they could get to actually having sex with their clothes on.

The first club they went to was one that Kris had driven by countless times but had never been in to. Never been to any clubs except Adam’s. He had no idea what was in store for him tonight, but as long as he was with Adam, he didn’t care. After getting their wrists stamped, they went in and all Kris could see were flashing lights illuminating a mass of bodies, some in costumes. He got a fair number of stares, mostly from men who then tried to grab his ass. They backed off once they saw that he was with Adam, however, since he was well known in this area. Adam led them to the bar and ordered a vodka tonic.

“Well gents, I’m off,” said Neil, “I see a few ladies over there who look like they are dying to know what’s under my kilt.” Neil left them at the bar and Kris just looked around, trying to get a feel for the evening.

“Come on, gorgeous, you and that fine ass of yours need to dance with me,” said Adam, dragging Kris into the crowd.

“Dance? Uh, I might need a few more drinks in me first.”

“Oh no, baby, you just let me lead the way.” They got to the middle of the floor and Adam clutched Kris tightly to his body. “Just pretend that we’re fucking,” he said with a smirk.

I can do that. Adam gripped Kris’ ass and began to grind against him in time to the beat. Ohhhh, yes, I can definitely to that. He rolled his hips and reached up to pull Adam down for a kiss, feeling the fangs press on his tongue and lips. Kris discovered that he had some rhythm in him and soon he was lost in the music and Adam’s body wrapped around him.

“You look so hot tonight, so fucking hot,” Adam said huskily, caressing Kris’ wings and then his bare back.

“Me? Goddamn. Adam, I almost came in my pants when I first saw you tonight!”

Adam growled, tilted Kris’ head back and ran his fangs up Kris’ neck, ending with a bite just under his ear. Kris moaned and ground harder into Adam. “Does this place have a back room somewhere?” he asked, grinning wickedly.

“You’re damn right it does,” Adam said, taking Kris’ hand and leading them out of the throng of people. The back room was more of a back area with a couch and a curtain drawn around it, but it was obviously occupied at the moment. Kris walked Adam back into a wall, his hands everywhere like he couldn’t get enough of touching him, and they locked in a heated kiss until they finally heard the unmistakable sounds of two people climaxing. A couple stumbled out from behind the curtain a minute later and Adam pulled Kris in.

Kris pushed Adam down onto the couch, but not too roughly, and immediately went for his pants. “Want to taste you, baby… want you in my mouth.” Adam groaned and helped Kris get his
complicated, criss-crossed leather pants off. *So beautiful.* Almost reverently, Kris ran a finger up Adam’s pulsing member. Then he stood up, took off his own pants and knelt back down, wanting Adam to see a completely naked angel between his legs.

Adam sucked in a breath at this sight and licked his lips. “Kris…that is so…” was all he got out before moaning loudly when Kris’s mouth enveloped his cock. Kris had no patience to take his time tonight and he gorged himself on Adam’s hot meat, hollowing his cheeks and sucking hard as his head moved up and down. Kris felt Adam grip his head and start to buck into his mouth. “Oh…oh…ohhhh…Kris…baby…” Kris relaxed his throat and took Adam all the way in. “Fuck!” Adam shouted. Suddenly Adam grabbed Kris under the arms and lifted him right off the floor.

“Hey I wasn’t done with that!” Kris said, pouting. But his disappointment was short lived when he found himself straddling Adam a second later.

“Sorry to take your candy away, my sexy little rabbit angel, but I’ll give you something sweet in return,” he said in a low voice and kissed Kris, biting down with his fangs and reaching to the floor for his pants at the same time. But Kris surprised him by whipping out a condom from his own pants faster than Adam could. *Haha! Uh-oh…I’m in for it now.* The look on Adam’s face was so raw with lust that it made Kris tremble from head to toe. *Drowning, I’m drowning.* Without moving his eyes an inch from Kris’, Adam sheathed himself with the condom, took the cock ring off of Kris’ wrist and wrapped it tightly around the base of his dick. *Oh my god, how is it possibly for him to be so sexy?* He leaned forward and pressed his mouth to Adam’s ear. “Fuck me,” he whispered.

Adam shuddered and then put two long fingers in his mouth, sucking on them until spit dribbled down to his wrist. He reached around Kris and pushed both fingers into his hole at the same time. Kris arched his back and rocked onto Adam’s fingers, little whimpered cries falling from his lips. Then he felt air underneath him as strong hands lifted him up by his ass cheeks, spreading them apart, and lowered him slowly onto Adam’s waiting cock. Kris moaned and threw his head back, a blissful expression on his face, spine curved in a graceful ‘S’ and his red wings trailing down to the ground.

“Kris,” Adam said in a choked voice, “you’re so beautiful, my dark angel…so beautiful.”

Kris gazed at him adoringly. “No, you’re the beautiful one.” *My love.* He twined their hands together and began riding Adam up and down, his length rigid and straining under the cock ring. They moved slowly at first, and then faster as they found a rhythm with Kris pounding down and Adam thrusting up at the same time. Adam leaned forward and crushed Kris to his body, biting his chest as their skin slapped together harder and harder. Kris’ cock rubbed against Adam’s torso and he groaned loudly, knowing that he would have come already if not for the strap restraining him. “Adam…Adam…please baby…let me come!” he wailed.

But Adam dug his fingers into Kris’ hips and rocked them faster…faster…harder…the couch began to creak with every thrust…Kris’ wings were flying out behind him…their moans and cries were desperate…frantic…Adam reached down and unsnapped Kris’ bond…Kris’ bottom lip quivered and then his mouth stretched wide open in a scream. “Adamm!” Hot cum stained Adam’s chest. Kris rose up all the way off Adam’s cock and slammed back down.

Adam’s entire body seized and he drew blood with his fangs. “Fuck!”

Drops of blood mixed with cum glued them together and they fell as one tangled body onto the couch. Their hearts beat in time to the pounding club music, racing, thumping against rib cages. “Kris…my sweet dark angel,” said Adam after a while of just stroking Kris’ hair.

Kris burrowed himself into Adam’s embrace as deeply as possible. *Can I stay here forever? But*
suddenly, the curtain was thrown back, and a disheveled Neil with his kilt on backwards stood there, smirking at them. “Time to move on boys! The night is still young!” he bellowed like a bull.

Ten minutes later they were in another cab on their way to the next club. They hit three more that night, and at each one Kris and Adam danced, drank and fucked until Kris didn’t think he would ever be able to walk properly again. When they were done screwing at what they had decided would be the last club of the night, Kris and a very wobbly Adam found Neil at the bar, looking just as fucked out as they were.

“You’re pretty,” Adam said with a giggle to Kris, stumbling a bit and flailing his arms out to stop himself from falling down. Adam had consumed a considerable amount of alcohol throughout the night, much more than Kris and Neil had. They were definitely tipsy but not as far gone as Adam.

“You’re pretty, too…and wasted,” Kris said, laughing and trying to steady Adam on his feet.

“I gotta pee,” said Adam, still giggling. “Pee, pee, pee…that’s a funny word…peeeeee.”

“Oh jesus, we better help him or he’ll piss all over everything,” said Neil, rolling his eyes. They each slung one of Adam’s arms around their neck and hauled him off to the bathroom. They put him in a stall because it lessened their chances of getting pissed on.

“Does he get this drunk every year?” Kris asked Neil as they waited for Adam.

“Actually no, he never drinks when we go out because he knows it clouds his judgment. But I think he must have felt safe to let his guard down because you’re with him.”

*He is safe with me. I wouldn’t let him do anything he’d regret in the morning.*

They heard Adam singing in the stall. “Pretty angel…pretty pretty anggelllll.”

Kris barked out a laugh and went to get him. “Come on, baby, time to go home.”

“I’m going to get us a cab,” said Neil, “can you handle him?”

“Sure,” said Kris. “Adam, my gorgeous drunkard, it’s time to go home.” He helped Adam zip up and dragged him out of the stall.

“Hooommee, hooommee with pretty pretty angggeelllll!”

They were almost at the bathroom door when Adam planted his feet and looked at Kris. “Come…home,” he said with a slurred voice,” with me…pretty angel.”

“What? No, baby, you’re going to your home and I’m going to mine, remember?”

“Nooooooo, home with meee.”

“Adam, you’re drunk, you’re not thinking clearly. You don’t want me to come home with you.”

“Yes,” Adam said, looking seriously at Kris and trying for all the world to speak coherently, “come…home with me…angel.”

“Did you plan this? Did you plan for me to come home with you tonight?”

“No, but you’re sooo pretty, angel…please…pleeease…come home with me.”

“Adam…no, I can’t.”
Adam’s lips trembled and tears began to form in his eyes. “Angel…doesn’t…want me?”

“Of course I want you, more than anything, haven’t I shown you that all night?”

“Then why…”

“Because, it shouldn’t be like this…not like this.” But Kris knew that it was pointless to try to reason with him when he was in this state.

Adam fell back against the bathroom wall and began to weep. “Angel doesn’t want meeeee!”

Kris felt his heart breaking. \textit{Shit. What the hell am I supposed to do now?}

\textbf{Chapter 16}

Adam fell back against the bathroom wall and began to weep. “Angel doesn’t want meeeee!” \textit{Of course he doesn’t want you. Ugly…fat…freak!} He slid down to the floor, body shaking with real sobs now as the words from ten years ago tormented him. “Angel…d-doesn’t…” he choked out.

“Shhhhhhh…Adam…”

He felt warm hands on his cheeks and looked up into brown eyes.

“Angel?” He wiped the back of his hand across his nose and sniffed.

“Yes, angel is going to take care of you.”

\textit{Angel…angel…} Adam wrapped his arms around the angel tightly and snuggled into his neck, tears starting to subside. He heard another voice now, too.

“Hey the cab is waiting, what’s taking so-- Adam! Kris, what’s going on? Is he okay?”

“I told him I wouldn’t go home with him, Neil, but then he started crying and…”

“Let me take him home then.”

“Noooooo!” Adam clutched the angel harder. \textit{Don’t leave me…please don’t leave me!}

The angel stood up but held on to Adam’s hand. “Neil, please…let me take care of him tonight, okay? Take the cab, we’ll get our own.”

“I don’t know…are you sure you can handle this? Where are you taking him?”

Adam was starting to feel sick. He tried to follow what they were saying, but the room was suddenly spinning, spinning…he held on tightly to the angel’s hand…\textit{what are they saying?} He thought he heard the angel…\textit{Kris}…say, “apartment.” Then the other man…\textit{Neil, your brother}…left.

“Come on, baby, put your arm around me…that’s right…here we go…it’s going to be all right.”

Adam rose slowly from the floor and felt the wing feathers tickle his neck as he tried to walk. “Almost there…a little further, Adam…” The night air was cold and it made his stomach churn harder.
“I…I don’t feel good…” He staggered to the side of the building and threw up all over the ground in front of it. Sturdy hands gripped his shoulders until he was done heaving, then turned him around and guided him towards the street. He heard a loud whistle and yellow car pulled up and stopped in front of them.

“Get in the cab, Adam, we’re going home now.”

His tongue felt heavy in his mouth. “You’re not…leaving me?”

“No, baby, I’m not leaving you. Come on now.”

“Okay.” He let the angel help him into the car and fell asleep almost immediately in the strong arms that encircled him.

***

A beautiful man with red wings was flying away, high in the sky. “Angel! Come back! Don’t leave me!” Adam ran and ran, stretching out his arms and trying to catch up, but the man looked down at him sadly and said, “I can’t be with you, Adam. You’re just a damaged freak. Good-bye!” “Nooooo! Come back, angel…don’t leave meee! Anggeeelllll!”

Incoherent screams suddenly pierced the silent night and Kris jumped up from his place on the floor. “Adam! Adam, wake up!” Adam opened his eyes a fraction and saw the blurry outline of a man’s face leaning over him. “Angel,” he whispered and stretched his arms wide. The bed sank a few inches and then Adam felt the angel curl around him completely. He sighed contentedly and fell back to sleep.

***

A dog was barking incessantly somewhere, a big dog by the sound of those deep, booming noises that were pounding into Adam’s semi-conscious, hung-over brain. Dogs should be banned on…what day is it? Oh my god, if that fucking dog doesn’t shut up…wait a minute, there aren’t any dogs around here… Shit, why does it feel like someone drilled holes in my skull? OH.

It was like a hailstorm had suddenly erupted in Adam’s head; images of the night before, feelings, thoughts, and sensations – they all pelted him simultaneously in a chaotic maelstrom until he felt like throwing up. He squeezed his closed eyes tightly as if this would help it all go away. Aren’t people supposed to forget everything they did when they were hammered? He became aware of a warm body covering him…Kris…and the bed beneath him that he knew wasn’t his. I’m naked…and so is he. This fact didn’t alarm Adam as it would have in the past, but he didn’t move, couldn’t move, feeling immobilized by the physical pain in his head and the knowledge of how shamefully he had behaved last night.

You begged him to come home with you. You cried and begged like a baby, completely out of control, totally vulnerable…anything could have happened. But you’re safe. You’re with Kris in his bed and he took care of you. Adam remembered Kris steadying him as he puked his guts out and Kris holding him in the cab. Isn’t that why you let yourself drink in the first place? You knew you’d
be safe with him. Adam slowly opened his eyes and saw Kris’ arm wrapped tightly around his waist. He suddenly recalled how terrified he had felt that Kris might leave him and thought about the dream he’d had in the middle of the night. He remembered the stabbing rejection when Kris wouldn’t come home with him, and the voices of his past taunting him, adding fuel to his self-loathing and sense of worthlessness, unworthy to be with Kris.

You put him in a terrible position...what was he supposed to do? Adam listened to the sound of Kris breathing for a minute and tried to figure out if he was upset or grateful that Kris had not come home with him. The feelings of rejection were still fresh, but they were mixed with intense relief that Kris had not taken advantage of the situation. Admit it, you want to let him in. Yes, okay fine, but not like that. Coward...you think you would've had the balls to ask if you weren’t drunk?

At least he didn’t leave me. He saw his dream in his mind again, “I can’t be with you, Adam. You’re just a damaged freak.” His whole body clenched in pain at the thought of Kris walking out on him and his head gave a nasty throb. How am I going to face him? What if he hates me after last night? Idiot...does it look like he hates you? Adam knew that Kris would want to talk about it all, but he didn’t have the energy for it and he was still so confused about the feelings that were warring within him. I need to go home.

Carefully, he tried to lift Kris’ arm up so he could roll away, but the arm only gripped him harder around the middle. “Leaving so soon?” said Kris.

“Uh...bathroom?” Coward. Adam sat up quickly and immediately regretted it. His vision swam with the pain in his head and he felt like he was going to be sick again.

“Whoa there,” Kris said softly. He sat up and grabbed Adam’s swaying body. “Let me help you...you need water and aspirin. Lie down and I’ll get you some.”

“You’ve done enough for me already,” Adam said, but he allowed Kris to guide him down onto his back. He hated the feeling of needing help but was comforted by it at the same time; he sighed quietly when Kris pecked him on the forehead before walking out of the room. Adam watched him go and admired his naked form. Kris was clean and his hair was a little damp. He must have showered last night. Oh god, I bet I look like shit...and my mouth smells like a trash can. Feeling embarrassed at appearing so needy and disheveled, Adam pulled the blankets up to cover himself and ran his hands over his face. My fangs are gone...and my face is clean...wow.

He turned his head, slowly so that the room wouldn’t start spinning again, and saw his clothes folded neatly on a chair and a washcloth streaked with the remnants of his makeup hanging on the back of it. Leaning against the wall beyond the chair were the dark red angel wings. At the sight of them, Adam groaned out loud and his dick twitched. It was too much. There were too many emotions swarming him at the same time. I need to go home.

Kris returned with a huge glass of water and a little bottle of extra strength Tylenol. He sat down on the edge of the bed and smiled. “Good morning, beautiful, or should I say afternoon since it’s one o’clock.”

“Is it really?” Adam asked, trying not to open his mouth too much.

Kris chuckled. “Adam, do you really think I care about your morning breath? Here…” He opened the bottle and tapped out two pills. “Take these and drink that whole glass. I promise it’ll help you feel better.”

Adam took the medicine and the water, raised his head up a little and swallowed them down. He drank all of the water and then really did have to use the bathroom; he squirmed a bit.
Kris studied him for a minute. “I can tell you’re freaking out.”

“No…yes…I mean I am little but I also have to pee like a racehorse.”

“Oh jesus, that is too funny!” Kris said laughing, brown eyes crinkled in mirth.

“What?”

“You probably don’t remember, but you were talking about pee last night, and singing and…oh shit, I’m sorry,” he said and stopped laughing when he spotted the uncomfortable look on Adam’s face.

“Come on, let me help you up.”

I need to go home. All he could think about now was the intense desire to get back to his sanctuary, to shower, call Ali and try to sort through his jumbled thoughts and feelings. Thank god I always ask for Halloween weekend off from work. He let Kris help him to his feet and just stood there a moment, trying to get his balance. Kris put an arm around his waist and kissed his neck, then looked up at Adam with worry.

“Matt is out, so no need to worry about…” Kris indicated their nakedness. Adam shivered and Kris’ brows furrowed even more. He left Adam for a moment and returned with a robe.

“Thanks.” Adam’s brain was still teeming and it was all he could do not to start laughing, crying and yelling all at once. The tension between them was becoming thick, palpable. This is unbearable. “I think I can make it on my own now,” he said putting on the robe, and walked to the hallway alone. He made it to the bathroom and sighed as he relieved himself, pressing his aching head on the cool tile wall above the toilet. Stop pushing him away…remember your dream? Do you want that to happen? Fuck. A tiny voice rose up amidst the storm in his head. Maybe I should go back to therapy. Ugh, I can’t even think about that right now.

He turned on the water, splashed his face and rinsed his mouth out thoroughly. He spotted some mouthwash and used that, too, tried to fix his hair and left the bathroom. He felt steadier on his feet and his headache was starting to lessen a bit as the Tylenol kicked in. When he returned to Kris’ room, Adam saw him sitting naked on the bed with his head down, looking sad and cute. Do something, Lambert…reassure him somehow before bolting out of here. Adam walked over, kneeled before Kris and took hold of his hands. Kris lifted his head and Adam saw tears in those beautiful brown eyes. Fuck. You made him cry, you bastard. You better fix this…you can’t lose him.

“Thank you for taking care of me last night,” he said sincerely. “I’m not mad at you. I’m glad you brought me here. I know I put you in a terrible spot last night and…I’m sorry, Kris.”

“Adam, I would do anything for you…anything. I was so worried that you would feel rejected when I didn’t come home with you, but…” his voice trailed off and he wiped at his eyes.

Adam shook his head and squeezed Kris’ hands. “It’s okay, but listen, I really need to go home now.”

“What? You want to leave? But…but can’t we talk about his some more…please?” Kris asked with a hint of pleading in his voice.

“I can’t. My head is still killing me, I need a shower plus I wouldn’t know what to say anyway. It’s too fucking much right now.”

“You could shower here, and then…and then…”

Why is he doing this? Can’t he see that I need some space? We can talk about this later. “Kris, what
the hell? I just need to go home and get my shit together, okay?” he said with a stab of annoyance.

“I guess I feel like somehow if you leave right now that…I don’t know…” Kris dropped his head again and whispered, “I’m scared of losing you.”

*What? Well that’s backwards.* “Why would you be afraid of losing me?”

“Because I’m worried that this is all going to be too much for you to handle, and you had some kind of nightmare last night and well, you’ve been through so much…” Kris said tentatively.

*No…no no no!* He stood up and stepped back from Kris. “So what you’re saying is that I’m some kind of damaged freak? Huh?” Adam said harshly, anger springing from the fear of his dream coming true.

Kris looked horrorstruck. “No! Oh my god, Adam, that’s no what I meant! I--”

But Adam was at his limit; his head was pounding again and he was completely overwhelmed. He tore off the robe and grabbed his clothes, pulling them on as he practically ran from the room.

“Adam! Come back! Don’t leave me!”

Adam halted just as his hand was on the handle of the front door. *What are you doing?* He turned around and saw Kris standing in the living room with a blanket wrapped around him and tears streaming down his face. *Shit, Lambert, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?* He took two long strides and enveloped Kris’ body in his arms. “Kris, Kris…I don’t understand…why are you so scared? Don’t you know that I’m not going anywhere? Don’t you know that I need you?” He looked down at Kris and kissed his forehead.

“You need me?” Kris asked in a wavering voice.

“Yes, baby, I do.” He ran a thumb under Kris’ eye to catch a tear.

Kris sniffed. “I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I’ve felt so strong, so confident recently, but last night I barely slept…I kept worrying about how you would feel when you woke up. I need you, too, Adam…so much.” He buried his head in the crook of Adam’s neck and choked out a little sob.

Adam stroked his head and whispered, “shhhh…it’s okay, my little rabbit.” He continued to murmur soothing words into Kris’ ear and held him tightly. After a few minutes, he put a finger under Kris’ chin, lifted his face and gazed into his watery eyes. *You’re falling for him…you know you are.* Adam bent his head and touched his lips gently to Kris’ trembling mouth. They lingered in a simple and sweet kiss -- little brushes and soft presses of lips.

Adam finally pulled back and ran a hand nervously through his hair. He took a deep breath to quell the butterflies in his stomach. *Go on, you can do it.* “I want you to come home with me, Kris, but I want to do it right. Can you give me some time to plan this?”

Kris’ face lit up with a beautiful smile. “Of course I can.” He pulled Adam’s head down for another kiss, this one more passionate, their tongues sweeping in and out hungrily until Adam let out a moan.

“You know how hot I am for you, baby, but I don’t think I can mange it right now,” Adam said with a small laugh. *Well that’s got to be a first.* “I think there is a knife in my head somewhere and…” He looked at Kris seriously, “I need a little space to get myself together, okay?”

“Okay, yeah…I can understand that.” Kris said, nodding his head. “Will you call me later though?”
“Absolutely.” Then he grinned slyly. “Maybe by tonight my head will be back to normal and I can make you come over the phone again.”

Kris shuddered. “Yes, please.”

Adam chuckled and gave him a last peck on the lips. “Okay, I’m going to go catch a cab and I’ll call you tonight…angel.” He smiled at the look of glee on Kris’ face and walked out the door. When he reached the sidewalk he pulled out his phone and pushed his speed dial. “Ali, I need your help.”

“You okay, puppy?”

“Yes. Ali…I want to go back to therapy.”

Chapter 17

Kris’ grandma had made the quilt for him just before he had left Arkansas; it was blue with narrow white stripes and incredibly soft and warm. Kris stood in his living room, still naked and wearing the blanket like a cape, trying to process everything that had just happened. But he was so tired, both physically and emotionally that he was really just zoning out with a smile on his face. The same dog that was barking earlier suddenly decided to have at it again and the sound jolted him out of his stupor. After wrapping the quilt tightly around himself, he shuffled back to his bedroom, hobbling since he was sore from last night’s escapades. He fell, a Kris-burrito, onto his bed and was asleep almost as soon as he landed.

It was dark out when Kris woke to his stomach grumbling loudly. The quilt was twisted all around his body and he could barely move, but he didn’t mind. He felt warm and safe in his cocoon, like his grandma was hugging him tightly as she had when he was boy. She always knew when I needed an extra big hug. Something sparkly caught his eye and he turned his head to look at his pillow. Glitter. Jesus, that stuff gets everywhere!

His stomach growled again and he tried to remember the last time he had anything to eat. Yeah, no…alcohol doesn’t count. He kicked and flailed until he was finally free of the blanket and got up to find some pajamas.

As he dug through a laundry basket, Kris thought about the nightmare that had made Adam scream so much. He must have been dreaming about his trauma. It had been terrifying to hear those sounds coming from Adam, and the only thing he could think to do was to cuddle him. It seemed to work, but he had been afraid about how Adam would react when he woke up and discovered that he was not in his own bed. But it would have been worse if I had gone home with him. He sighed deeply. I just never know…one minute he’s a fierce sexy beast, the next an emotional mess and then a sweet, sensitive boyfriend. He pulled out a pair of boxer shorts from the basket and slipped them on, then caressed the mark on his chest where Adam had bitten him last night with his fangs. I love him no matter what and I’m not giving up on him, but damn…sometimes it’s hard to keep up with the roller coaster. Like you were any better, crying like that this afternoon. But I need him.

If he was being honest with himself, Kris felt awed at the intensity of his feelings for Adam. He had never been obsessed with anyone like this, but he knew there was nothing he could do to change it, nor did he want to. The thought of Adam flipping out and running away had scared Kris enough that
his confidence had suddenly toppled like a house of cards. But he said he needs me, too, and he really does want me to come to his apartment...it wasn’t just the alcohol talking. He smiled to himself at that and padded down the hallway towards the kitchen in search of food.

The door to Matt’s bedroom was open. Kris stuck his head in and saw him lounging on his bed with his laptop open. “Hey.”

Matt looked up and grinned. “Hey. Must have been some party last night, it’s six o’clock and you’re just now getting up? Is lover boy still sleeping?”

“What?” He must have heard us last night.

“Oh. No, we were up earlier and he had to go home, but I was so tired. Anyway, hope we didn’t make too much noise coming in.”

“Naw, it’s all right, I fell right back to sleep. Jeff’s party was pretty good, but….” Matt squinted at him. “Uh, did you get hurt or something? Your chest…is that a bite mark?”

“Well Adam was dressed as a vampire,” he said, waggling his eyebrows and smirking, “and he--”

“Okay, okay, that’s enough…seriously,” Matt said abruptly, waving his arms and looking away.

Kris chuckled and continued towards the kitchen. I wonder if Adam will ever have male friends, I think he and Matt would get along great.

After scrounging for a while and finding nothing that appealed to him, Kris called out to Matt, “Wanna order some pizza?”

“It’s about time you asked her out, I was getting ready to tell you to grow a pair!” Kris teased.

“Ha ha, very funny!”

“You know you love me! I’m getting pizza anyway and I’m not sharing for breakfast tomorrow!”

By seven-thirty, Kris was full of his favorite BBQ pizza and sprawled out on the couch watching TV and waiting. When is he going to call me? He was not ashamed in the least to spend his whole evening waiting for a phone call from Adam because that’s what people do when they are in love. After a while he started to doze off and his phone dropped to the floor. A dream about vampires had just started to play in his mind when his loud ringtone went off and startled him so much that he fell off the couch with a shout. He scrambled for his phone with a thumping heart and touched the answer key.

“H-hello?” he said, breathing hard.

“Not starting without me, are you sexy?”

“No, I just fell off the couch when you called,” Kris said with a laugh, “I was kind of sleeping.”

“Hmm, should I let you get back to sleep then?” Adam asked playfully.

“Not a chance, gorgeous. Listen, before we get all hot and bothered, I just want to say, well, I’m sorry for being so useless earlier today.”

“Hey, don’t do that. You don’t need to apologize for being scared, there’s been plenty of times when I…” Adam trailed off and fell silent.

“Adam?”
“Yeah, sorry about that. I, um, kind of wanted to tell you something, too before we, uh, you know,” Adam said hesitantly.

Despite their declarations of mutual need this afternoon, Kris couldn’t help but feel nervous upon hearing these words and the uncharacteristic uncertainty in Adam’s voice. “Okay, what is it?”

“Shit, this is really hard for me to say, Kris, but I promised myself that I would. It’s just that…fuck.”

Oh god, please don’t break my heart!

Kris stood up and began to pace, willing himself not to panic. “Adam, please just tell me.”

Adam sighed heavily on the other end. “Okay. I’m, well I’m going to get some help.”

“What?”

Okay, that didn’t sound like ‘I’m leaving you.’ Calm down.

“Please don’t make me say it again.”

“But what did you say, I couldn’t understand you.”

“Fine. I’m going to get some help, okay? There.”

“Help with what? What do you mean— oh! You mean, like therapy?”

“Yes,” Adam said tersely.

“But that’s so awesome!” Be careful now, remember what he said about you thinking he was a damaged freak? “I mean if you think you need it?”

“I do, and well, I wasn’t going to tell you, but…”

“Thank you, Adam. I can’t tell you how much it means to me that you did.” Kris felt his heart melting. He’s so brave, god I love him so much! “So, when are you starting?” Hope that didn’t sound pushy.

“Next week. Fuck… I don’t want to talk about this anymore, okay?”

“No problem at all,” Kris said quickly. “Let’s move on to something more along the lines of hot sex.”

“Much better topic,” Adam said, sounding relieved. “I have the perfect idea, too. You still have your half of the tie, don’t you?”

“Course I do.” Kris replied and headed into his room.

“Good, now do what I say, baby, it’s my show,” Adam said firmly.

Kris’ dick was like Pavlov’s dog, twitching in response to Adam’s sex voice. I love it when he takes control like that. “I’ll do anything you say, I’m yours,” he said huskily.

“Get the tie and get naked,” Adam commanded.

Kris almost tripped over his own feet in his hurry to obey. He grabbed the tie from his guitar case and stripped quickly, then lay down on his bed. “Okay, I’m naked and ready. What are you doing?”

“We’re going to be like mirror images… I’m doing exactly what I tell you to do. Now lie down on your back, bend your knees and spread your legs for me, nice and wide. Let me see those cheeks
open up, baby.”

Kris imagined Adam naked and spread out like that and his heart began to race. “Adam,” he moaned.

“Take that tie by one end and I want you to slowly trail it down your chest, down your stomach and over your cock…you’re so hard for me already, aren’t you?” Adam crooned.

“Yes,” Kris whispered, shuddering as the tie grazed his dick. Knowing that Adam was doing the same thing was driving him crazy. *I can just see him, all those freckles and that full sized dick that I can still feel after last night.*

“Keep going. Let it fall between your legs. Lift it up and down so you can feel it on your balls and over your hole…tilt your hips up if you have to, I want you to feel that silky smoothness right where I put my tongue on our very first night.

“I feel it, Adam,” Kris said, starting to breathe hard remembering how he was tied up, how Adam had licked him until he begged to be fucked.

“Mmmm…remember it, baby? How gorgeous you were as I stuck my tongue in you over and over again? How you begged for my cock?”

Kris saw it all in his mind again, felt Adam’s hands spread him apart, felt Adam’s wet tongue ravaging his hole. His dick throbbed against his stomach, dripping and aching. “Can I touch myself…please?”

“No, not yet. I want you to wrap that tie around and around your dick all the way up, and do it tight, Kris.”

Kris steadied the phone with his shoulder and did as Adam said, whimpering as he wound the cloth around his length, pulling it taught as he went.

“Now get those fingers nice and wet for me.” Kris suddenly heard Adam sucking on his fingers, smacking his lips around them and swirling his spit in his mouth. *Oh my god, that is so hot.* He stuck two fingers in his mouth and pumped them in and out. “Do it, Kris, push them into your hole all the way, feel my cock inside you…feel me grabbing your hips and pounding into you on that desk.” Kris could hear Adam panting now. “So tight…so hot.”

“You feel so good inside me…so good,” Kris groaned as he fucked his fingers in and out of his hole and recalled how Adam had stretched him open, made his muscles tremble, made him sweat and leak his pre-cum all over the desk. His knees fell all the way open and he angled his hand, thrusting his fingers rapidly now and touching that bundle of nerves inside every time. “Adam…please…let me…” he whined.

“Yes,” Adam puffed, “but don’t…stop…your fingers.”

Kris wrenched at his cock, sliding his hand up and down the smooth fabric and squeezing as he relentlessly fingered himself with his other hand.

“Faster, Kris, I want to hear…you scream…my name,” he panted.

“Yes…” Kris sped up both hands.

“Faster…” Adam ordered.
“Oh god…yes…”

“Harder…”

“Yes!…yes!…yes!”

“Take it off.”

Kris unwrapped the tie and stroked his cock one more time. “Yes! Adam!” he shouted, body clenching into a tight ball, his seed shooting out in hot waves.

“Oh…ohhh shit! Kris!”

Kris was trembling from head to toe as if he had a raging fever. Love him…love him… “Damn…you sexy…you gorgeous, hot…”

Adam let out a long, throaty moan that quivered before dying out. “Fucking… unbelievable, angel… you were so beautiful…so beautiful.”

He fingered himself, too. I didn’t know he would do something like that. Kris pulled the quilt over his body and curled onto his side. He cuddled the phone to his ear, wishing that Adam were next to him, holding him. “How can I miss you so much?” he said as he started to relax into post-Adam bliss, “I want you here with me in my bed.”

“I want that, too, Kris. I mean you, in my bed.”

He wanted to tell Adam how much he loved him, how desperate he was to spend every waking moment with him. “Adam, I…” You can’t say that stuff to him yet, not yet. “I can’t wait for that.”

“Me, too,” Adam said quietly, “I’ve been thinking about it all day and I want to plan it for next week, for Thursday when I don’t work.”

Kris gasped in wonder and then swallowed a lump in his throat. “Wow. I don’t know what to say. Thank you for trusting me that much.”

Adam spoke in a whisper now, as if he were sharing a precious secret, and Kris could almost see his wide, fearful eyes. “Last night I dreamt that you left me. It scared me real bad and I can’t let that happen.”

Holy shit, that was his nightmare? Why is he so afraid of losing me? Can’t he see how devoted I am to him? “That’s not going to happen, I’m not going to leave you, Adam.”

“No matter what?” he asked.

Kris heard Adam’s unspoken question. Even if he is in therapy for the rest of his life, even if the roller coasters are a permanent feature of our relationship. “No matter what.”

“This is not going to be, you know, easy for me or for you either. I’m just warning you now, in case you want to change your mind.”

“Adam, I’m with you all the way…you’re not alone anymore.”

Chapter 18
“So, it’s a good idea, right? It’s not too soon?”

“It’s not my opinion that matters, Adam, what do you think?”

“Well, I’ve only known him just over a month.”

“Time doesn’t apply in this case. The question is, do you trust him?”

Adam sat back in the oversized chair and thought about it. As he did so, his eyes roamed around the room, taking in the certificates that had accumulated on the wall since the last time he’d been in this office.

He had spent the better part of an hour filling in his old therapist on the last eight years of his life. Okay, so he had skirted around his sex addiction a bit, but she was pretty damn clever and Adam knew she had probably figured it out. He hadn’t cried or revealed his deepest, darkest fears – no, but he did tell her that he hadn’t dated since he was nineteen and that he didn’t have any male friends. And, of course, she had not been surprised to hear that men were not allowed in his apartment. She had asked about his trauma symptoms, if he’d had any flashbacks, nightmares or suicidal thoughts since she had last seen him. “Yes to all three, but the last one, not since two years ago.” He told her about his flashback at Kris’ apartment, but wouldn’t tell her what had happened two years ago.


“Okay then, I support you on this. It’s a really healthy step, and I’m very impressed by how much effort you are putting in to your relationship with Kris. Now, have you thought about what you are going to do if you get seriously triggered again?”

“Well, last time I kind of ran out on him and then called Ali,” Adam said, feeling heat rising up his chest and neck.

“Adam,” Sheila said leaning forward in her chair, “there’s no reason to be ashamed. You did the best you could in an unexpected and frightening situation, and thank goodness you have Ali, she was always such an excellent support for you and I’m glad she still is.”

Regardless of her words, Adam found it hard to push away the ever-present shame, his almost constant companion for nearly a decade that only seemed less intense when he was in control of things. That’s not entirely true anymore though...there have been times with Kris...

“I take it that you don’t want to run out on him again, though?” she asked.

“No, I really don’t, but…” he said looking down at his lap. I suck at this.

“Look at me.” She waited until she had eye contact. “You know that these flashbacks will never completely stop until you work through the unresolved issues and learn some more skills, right?” Adam sighed and nodded grudgingly. “In the mean time, if you do have one when you are with Kris, would you let him comfort you afterward instead of running away?”

Huh. “I’m not sure...maybe?” he said with a frown.

She studied him for a moment. “That’s perfectly fine to be uncertain. It’s your first time trusting a man like this, so do what feels right and use your supports if you need to. So, before we end today, why don’t you tell me a little about Kris?”
Adam’s face relaxed immediately and he smiled from ear to ear. “He’s so amazing, Sheila. He’s unbelievably gorgeous, and funny and smart, and patient with me, you know, plus he’s a singer and a musician, and oh my god, he plays the ukulele can you believe that and he’s sweet and cute but also kind of fierce and did I mention that he’s sexy as hell?”

Sheila chuckled. “Well, I can see that you are completely smitten with him,” she said with a smile.

Adam blushed and nodded.

“Alright, we’re out of time. Let’s set up an appointment for next week.”

***

Two days later, Adam woke up at nine o’clock without an alarm. It’s Thursday. Today. He’s coming over today. He leapt out of bed at once, his brain already in full gear. So much to do…oh my god how am I going to get it all done by six? Clean, shop, cook, then I’ve got to find the perfect outfit… damn Ali for having to work today!

After cleaning his apartment thoroughly and throwing in a load of laundry, Adam headed out to get groceries for his first ever dinner date. He happened to be an excellent cook; however, he had no idea what would appeal to Kris and he had never cooked for a man before. He likes sushi and Thai food, so he must be open to different things, but he’s from Arkansas, don’t they like meat and potatoes there? As he walked around the aisles trying to get inspired, he thought about the last two nights they had spent together. On Tuesday Kris had taken Adam to an open mic night at a local coffee shop where they both ended up singing two songs each. He’s so talented. I wish I could play the guitar. Adam smiled, remembering how they had made out in Kris’ car afterward until it drove them crazy and they eventually parked on a deserted street and had sex in the back seat like teenagers.

His smiled faltered when his brain moved on to last night. Of course, being with Kris in the club room after his show was as good as usual, but… I’m going to get fired, I know it. And after tonight, maybe I won’t even use that room anymore. I’ll lose at least half of my audience if not more. He was suddenly filled with indignation at being used for sex instead of appreciated for his singing ability. But the feeling was gone as soon as it came. You did this to yourself…you’re just a fucking worthless whore. No, whores are desperate…those men come to me, they are the desperate ones…right? He stopped and stood in the middle of the produce department next to a bin of grapefruit. Right?

“Sir, can I help you?”

“Huh…what? Oh, no. No, thank you I’m fine,” he told the smiling girl wearing a Whole Foods company shirt. She nodded and moved on. It doesn’t matter anyway, I’m not going to do that anymore. I’m with Kris now. But what if you weren’t? You’d still be doing it, wouldn’t you? Adam clenched his hands and gritted his teeth, then pushed away the thoughts and tried to focus on shopping again.

What should I make for him? Kris’ beautiful face loomed in his mind and he sighed. The smiling employee spotted his besotted expression and giggled.

5:30pm. Adam was dressed to impress in a pair of black skinny jeans, a fitted button down blue shirt that matched his eyes and just a hint of eyeliner. He was standing in front of his dresser and rolling
up his cuffs when he caught sight of the bed in the mirror. It was made with hospital style precision; the corners were folded and tucked perfectly and not a single wrinkle could be seen on the entire surface. My bed. I'm going to take Kris into my bed tonight. His stomach writhed with nerves and excitement. I can't believe this is really going to happen. He drew in a shaky breath and went to the kitchen to check on the sauce, stopping once to straighten a picture frame on the wall.

“Mmmm...perfect,” he said after tasting the shitake mushroom-wine sauce that he had made from scratch. The rest of the meal was fairly simple: roasted asparagus and baked potatoes that were just finishing up in the oven, and some tender cuts of steak that were seasoned and waiting to be grilled. Everything is just right. Adam threw the steaks on the grill pan and walked around his apartment to give it a last check. He ended his inspection by closing his bedroom door and went back to the kitchen to finish cooking.

Six o’clock came and went. I bet he’s trying to find parking. Adam paced, willing himself not to pick at his nail polish. He glanced at his reflection in the hallway mirror. I look good. The food is good. It’s all going to be good. Then why do I feel like puking? There was a knock on the door. Oh shit... shit shit shit. Okay, calm down, you can do this. It's Kris, remember? You're going to be fine.

He opened the door. “Wow,” he said, staring open-mouthed at Kris.

“Right back at ya,” Kris said with hungry eyes, “you look good enough to eat.”

Adam continued to gawp at him, dressed to kill in a pair of tight jeans, a black v-neck shirt that clung to his pecs and a leather jacket. Adam’s body was responding from just looking at him and he noticed with a glance down that Kris was in the same predicament. They stared for a few more seconds and then met in the middle for a searing kiss. Adam filled his hands with Kris’ perfect ass and pulled him up to his toes so that their mouths could have their way with each other. “I’ve got… dinner…waiting,” Adam said a minute later, slightly out of breath.

“Right…yeah,” said a winded Kris. He sniffed the air. “Something smells amazing in there.”

Oh. We’re still in the hallway. Adam took Kris’ hand and walked quickly over the threshold into his apartment, as if doing it fast would make it easier. There, I did it. “So…” he said, wringing his hands.

Kris took Adam’s hands in his. “Thank you, for letting me in,” he said, looking deeply into Adam’s eyes.

Adam blinked a few times but felt too overwhelmed to saying anything. I think I might love him. He cleared his throat. “How about we eat first and I’ll show you around later.”

“Sounds excellent, I’m starving.” Kris took his jacket off and followed Adam into the kitchen where a small table was set for two. “Wow,” Kris murmured, looking at the perfectly arranged settings. He ran a finger over a ringed cloth napkin. “You don’t do anything half way, do you?” Adam beamed and began carrying platters of food to the table. “Jesus, Adam, I’m totally embarrassed to say that my cooking skills don’t go beyond Ramen noodles,” Kris said with a laugh.

He is too fucking adorable. How did I end up with a football-loving bachelor type of guy? Adam motioned for Kris to sit and began serving up the food. “I didn’t know what you liked, so I just…”

“It looks amazing, really, I’m stunned here. You didn’t have to go through all this trouble.”

“Actually, I love to cook, I’ve just never done it for, you know, a date or anything.” I’m having a dinner date at my apartment! The thought made him giggle nervously, but he quickly turned it into a cough. “Anyhow, I hope you like your steak a little rare.” He spooned some of the sauce over the
steak and asparagus and handed the plate to Kris. “And I have no idea what you like to drink. I’ve got wine, beer, soda, water, a bunch of different juices and…”

Kris chuckled and gazed at Adam lovingly. “I’ll have whatever you’re having.”

“Wine it is.” Adam said and got the bottle of Cabernet that he had opened earlier to let it breathe a bit. He poured a little in each of their glasses and waited for Kris to start eating.

“Oh my god, Adam, this is incredible! What is in this sauce?” Kris asked after his first bite.

_He likes it! Okay, really now, enough with the little boy routine, Lambert._ “Oh just some mushrooms and a few other things,” he said carelessly, but he couldn’t help feeling ridiculously satisfied with himself. They ate in silence for a few minutes.

“So I’ve been meaning to ask you,” Kris began halfway through the meal, “have you ever recorded anything?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I have. I’ve been working on a demo album. Oh, that reminds me, I listened to yours, Kris, and it’s really good, I mean…you’re going to get picked up for sure.” Adam didn’t reveal that he’d been listening to the tracks on repeat ever since Kris gave it to him. Music was an easy subject, and they spent the remainder of dinner talking about their musical influences and their ambitions to become recording artists.

_That went really well._ Adam brought the dishes to the sink and turned around to find Kris standing right in front of him.

“What’s for dessert?” he asked with sexy grin.

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” Adam teased. “But you’ll have to be patient, angel. Come on, let me give you the dime tour.” _Got to do this right, even though he’s technically been here before._ He walked Kris slowly around the living room, giving him a chance to see pictures and other personal items.Adam was ready with responses to any questions Kris might have, but Kris just looked and smiled and let Adam take the lead. They moved into the hallway and to Adam’s studio off to the right. Kris let out an audible gasp when he saw inside the room. “This is so cool! Man, I would kill for a setup like this!”

“Thanks!” Adam said with pride. He shut the studio door and waved a hand to the left. “That’s the bathroom, not much to see there and…” _My bedroom._ He led Kris to the end of the hallway and stood in front of the closed door.

“Adam,” Kris said squeezing Adam’s hand, “we don’t have to go in there tonight. I’m fine if you want to take things slow.”

Adam shook his head. “It’s been slow enough already, Kris,” he said turning to face him, “I want you in my bed, on purpose this time.” He breathed in sharply and opened the door on the exhale. “Give me your hands.” Kris offered his hands and Adam took them, and then pulled him into the room walking backwards. When he felt his legs hit the bed he stopped and embraced Kris in a tight hug. Adam knew he was trembling a bit and tried to force his body to relax.

“Why don’t we just sit and talk for a while,” suggested Kris.

_That’s not a bad idea, but I’ve got a better one._ “No, let’s watch TV instead.”

“You have a TV in here?” Kris asked sounding impressed.
“Mm-hmm.” Adam walked to the large cabinet opposite his queen-sized bed and opened the door to reveal a 42-inch flat screen TV.

“Nice! Perfect for football,” Kris teased.

“We are not watching that, I don’t care how many times they slap each other’s ass.” Adam walked to the bed and kicked his shoes off before he climbed onto it, moved the pillows aside and sat leaning against the headboard. He patted the spot next to him. “Come here.”

Kris toed off his shoes and joined Adam. “Okay, no football,” he said with a mock sigh.

Adam chuckled and put an arm around Kris as he turned the TV on with the remote. This is nice. We’re cuddling on my bed and it’s okay. Kris snuggled into Adam’s side and they started watching ‘The Office.’

“Oh my god,” Kris said half shielding his eyes, “the second hand embarrassment is almost too much, but I love this show.” He groaned at Michael’s behavior and laughed loudly at the antics between Dwight and Andy.

Adam turned his head and looked at Kris fondly. So cute, so sexy... and look at how patient he has been. He’s amazing...I’m so lucky.

Kris caught Adam staring at him. “What?” he asked, still chuckling from the scene on TV.

“You’re amazing.” Adam said seriously and brushed hand his across Kris’ face.

Kris stopped laughing and twisted his upper body to face Adam. “No more than you,” he responded quietly. He held Adam’s hand to his cheek and then kissed it.

Adam turned off the TV, tossed the remote on his bedside table and stared at Kris. The intensity of feelings coursing through him made it feel like he had never truly experienced them before: trust, desire, affection, concern...love. He was awed by the beauty of the emotion and a little scared by it at the same time. “Kris,” he said in wide-eyed wonder, then cupped Kris’ face and brought their mouths together. He licked the seam of his lips and was rewarded with immediate entrance. Adam took his time exploring and even swiped his tongue across Kris’ bottom teeth. Kris moaned and wound his fingers tightly into Adam’s hair.

Suddenly Adam wanted to be in absolute control of the situation. If he were being honest with himself, he enjoyed Kris’ assertiveness, but tonight Adam needed him to be completely submissive. He stopped the kiss and tried to speak in a confident tone. “Be a good bottom for me tonight, baby...okay?”

Kris nodded and withdrew his hands from Adam’s hair, showing that he understood the request. “Whatever you want,” he said softly.

Adam started to undress Kris, pulling his shirt over his head, and saw the bite mark on his chest. He caressed the spot and then got to work on those tight sexy jeans. When he saw that Kris was completely bare beneath them, he couldn’t help but groan with desire and tugged the pants off quickly. Adam was still getting used to foreplay and taking things slower than he was accustomed to, and he couldn’t figure out if he wanted to be rough and fast or slow and sweet with Kris.

Once Kris was naked, Adam stopped thinking and let his instincts take over, pushing Kris onto his back and straddling his upper chest. He stuck his index finger into Kris’ mouth, hooked it behind his lower teeth and pressed down. “Open wide, angel.” Kris obeyed at once and Adam felt a chill run down his spine at seeing that waiting, hot mouth stretched open for him. He stroked his cock a few
times and slapped it lightly on Kris’ bottom lip.

Kris licked his lips and then stuck his tongue all the way out.

“Ohhhh, my little rabbit, so sexy…so fucking hot,” Adam moaned as he eased his length inside Kris’ mouth. He knew from their very first night together that Kris could take whatever he gave him. Slowly, he slid himself in and out, in and out, thrilling at the feel of Kris’ tongue on the underside of his dick. He leaned forward onto his knees, placed his hands on the headboard, and continued to glide gently back and forth. “Close,” he said.

Kris closed his lips around Adam and moved to grab him but then stopped himself. “No, do it, Kris, I want you to touch me.” Kris smiled around Adam’s dick and clutched his ass, but not too firmly; he just let his hands rest there without pulling Adam in. Shit, so fucking good… “S-so good,” Adam stuttered and began to drive a little harder and deeper. He felt Kris hum and then relax his throat. “Ohhhh…oh god, baby…yes…” Adam panted and increased his speed, fucking Kris’ mouth again and again. He dropped his head and leaned all of his weight on his hands as he thrust without holding back now. “World class,” he muttered, looking down at Kris.

Adam saw Kris’ lips stretched around him and his shining eyes gazing up at him with worship, and that combination nearly sent him over the edge. “Hold me tighter…yes, fuck, just like that…pull me in, angel.” So much for staying in control. Adam couldn’t help it; he loved feeling Kris swallow him down, loved knowing that he was wanted that much. “Harder.” Kris gave a muffled groan and gripped Adam’s ass, sucking firmly as he stuffed his face with Adam’s cock.

Adam’s voice grew louder and higher in pitch. “Yes…ohmyyyygoddd yes!” He slammed his cock into Kris’ mouth and pounded his fists on the wall as his cum pumped down Kris’ throat. “Angel…Kris… ohhhhh,” he moaned as Kris sucked him dry, drinking every last drop until Adam couldn’t hold himself up anymore and he collapsed backwards, shifting his body in midair so that he landed on the bed. Shit...how the fuck does he make me come apart like that? His chest heaved almost painfully as he tried to catch his breath. “Kris…come to me.”

Kris clambered over to Adam and let his body be engulfed by Adam’s arms and legs. “Best dessert ever,” Kris murmured, running his tongue over his lips as if he were savoring a delicious treat.

_Goddamn! Someday I hope I can return the favor._ And just like that, Adam didn’t care about control. He wanted to give something to Kris, to make him feel how he was feeling, loved, cared for...adored. He sat up and brought Kris with him. "My sweet angel,” he whispered, and kissed him with all the affection and passion he could muster, tasting himself on Kris and longing, yearning for him. As they kissed, Adam guided them back down on the bed, cradling Kris with one hand behind his head and the other beneath his upper back. Resting on his forearm, Adam looked at the man before him and felt blessed for the first time in ten years.

Softly and tenderly, he began to kiss Kris’ body, first his forehead, then his neck and collarbone, moving down slowly to explore every inch of him with his mouth, wanting to know him completely. _Never in my life did I think this was possible, that I would feel this way about another man._ Kris moaned quietly and ran his fingers through Adam’s hair when he could reach it. Adam neared Kris’ groin and tried not to hesitate before kissing his length gently, then he poked out his tongue and tasted it briefly. Kris shuddered and writhed a little. Adam smiled and licked it again, watching how Kris responded. He wanted to do what Kris had done, but he knew he wasn’t ready for that yet. _I’ll give him the best that I can._

“Adam,” Kris said hoarsely, “you don’t have to.”

“I want to, Kris. I know I won’t be as good as you were, but…I want to make you feel good.”
Before Kris could say another word, Adam opened his mouth and lowered it halfway down, and then stopped to absorb the sensations. *Tangy, soft, smooth.* He moved his tongue around back and forth a little and then pulled off.

Kris was visibly trembling and panting. “Adam…baby…more?” he asked hopefully.

“More,” Adam replied, and went back down, this time about three-quarters of the way. He formed his lips into a circle and carefully moved his head up and down, making sure that the tip didn’t touch the back of his throat. He heard Kris moaning and pounding the bed with his fists. “Adam…oh god baby, feels so good,” Kris groaned and whipped his head from side to side on the bed. “I’m doing that. I’m making him feel that way. Maybe I can go a little deeper. No. Stop now before it gets away from you. You have all the time in the world to practice this. He kissed the head one last time and sat up, smiling and pleased with himself.

Kris looked frantic with need now. His dick was rock hard, covered in Adam’s spit and streaming pre-cum onto his stomach. “Want you so bad…please…please,” he begged, clenching his fists on the bed.

Adam got up, went to his dresser and pulled open the top drawer, which was full to overflowing with condoms. He grabbed one along with one of the many bottles of lube that were piled in the drawer. When he returned to the bed, Adam could tell that Kris was doing his best to hold off from touching himself. He settled in between Kris’ legs, lifted them and pushed his knees back far enough that his ass was level with Adam’s mouth. If Adam prided himself on anything sexually, it was his ability to drive men insane with his tongue in and around that sensitive ring of muscle. True, he was picky about who got that kind of special treatment in the past, but right now he wanted nothing more than to make Kris come apart with pleasure. He spread Kris with his hands and licked a long path across his hole.

“Ohhhh, jesus…Adam…I don’t know how long I can stand that, baby.”

“Mmmm,” was Adam’s only reply. Then he began to kiss Kris’ entrance as if it were his mouth, thrusting his tongue in and out, licking all around it and taking in big mouthfuls of skin with his lips.

“Adam…that is…holy mother of god!” Kris cursed. He started to whine as Adam carried on relentlessly rimming him. *Love his taste, it’s so…him.* Again and again Adam fucked Kris with his tongue and mouth until Kris was literally crying and shouting. Adam looked up and saw tears leaking from Kris’ eyes and decided to have mercy on him at last. He sat back, put on the condom and pushed into Kris, slowly. Adam had made a habit of avoiding eye contact during sex because it was too intimate, but this time, he made sure to do so. He hovered over Kris and looked straight into his eyes as he began to move in and out, but he could only stand it for about a minute…*it’s like looking into the sun…before had to lean down and kiss him. He thought that maybe this was what people meant by the phrase ‘making love.’*

Kris wrapped his legs around Adam and they struck a rhythm, but Adam knew that Kris was desperate for release. He reached down and began to pump Kris’ cock in time to his thrusts. Kris was beyond words now and he just moaned louder and louder as Adam drove into him with an ever-increasing pace and jerked him off simultaneously. Faster and faster Adam pounded and then, daringly, he sat back just a little and licked a long, wet stripe right up Kris’ dick. “Uhhhh! Yesssss!” Kris hollered and clench his entire body around Adam so tightly that it almost knocked the wind out of him. Witnessing that kind of abandon was more than Adam could take and he fell over the edge with a last thrust, crying out for Kris.

Sweat beaded on their bodies, dripping down their temples and onto Adam’s now wrinkled bedspread. They didn’t move for a while, arms and legs tangled together and cum everywhere. “I
don’t think I’ll ever be able to move again…ever,” said Kris finally.

Adam chuckled but he didn’t stir. “I’ll take that as a complement.” He breathed in Kris’ scent and felt nothing but pure bliss. After a while his back started to feel cold as the sweat dried and he mentally kicked himself for making the bed so well. “Angel, I want to get under the covers with you and cuddle.”

Kris groaned as Adam rolled off of him. “Are you sure we’ll be able to? Looks like your blanket is painted onto your bed,” he said with a smirk.

“Ha ha.” Adam got up, shivering, and gave the blanket and top sheet a hard yank. “There, now scoot your smart ass under already…I’m freezing.” He got back in and encircled his long limbs around Kris, spooning him from behind. “Ahhhh,” he sighed, feeling Kris’ warmth next to him, “that’s better.” They were both asleep in the next minute.

Adam woke up a little later and checked the clock on his bedside table. 9:30pm. Kris was still sound asleep in his arms, but Adam suddenly felt wide-awake. He was so comfortable and happy that he decided to watch a little TV rather than extricate himself from Kris. Adam reached back and fumbled for the remote until his hand finally landed on it. He turned on the TV but set the volume to 1 so it wouldn’t wake Kris. Oooh, Supernatural is on. Damn, I missed the first half. He liked the show but soon discovered that his alertness was short lived, and just made it to the end before he drifted back to sleep with the sound of the ten o’clock news coming on in the background.

“And the top news story tonight: Sam Clarke has escaped from California State prison today. Clarke was initially charged with statutory rape, assault and battery ten years ago. Seven others involved in the same crime were also charged at that time but remain imprisoned. Clarke was released two years ago after serving his sentence but was almost immediately arrested and imprisoned again after committing armed robbery. The details of his escape are still unclear, but police have launched a full search and investigation…”

Adam and Kris slept on, bodies pressed closely together, undisturbed until dawn.

Chapter 19

“And that’s our top stories this morning. Next up on KTLA Morning News, how you can save money by shopping green.”

Huh? Kris’ eyes fluttered open and he saw the garish lights of the TV flickering in the still dark room. Ugh…what time is it? He squinted and saw 6:35am on the cable box above the TV. Where is the damn remote…ahhh, yes… he clicked off the power and snuggled back into Adam.

He woke again hours later to the feel of soft fingers playing up and down his chest. “Morning, beautiful, what time is it?”

“Sorry, angel, I just couldn’t help myself. It’s nine o’clock.”

“Don’t apologize, I love the feel of your hands on me any time. Nine o’clock huh? Excellent, so we have the whole day to stay in bed,” Kris sighed, and pulled Adam’s arms around him tighter.

“Well I don’t have to be to work until later tonight, that’s true, but I am feeling rather…sticky.”
Kris chuckled. “Me too, and I think we might have messed up your amazingly well made bed—oh nonono heeyyy! No fair, tickling is not fairrrr aahhhhhhh! I surrender! I surrender!” Kris squirmed and laughed until Adam suddenly stopped. He panted, out of breath, and discovered that Adam was on top of him, pinning his hands down and looking at him with mischievous eyes. Kris felt Adam’s hard length against his own and instantly forgave him for the tickle attack.

“I have you at my mercy now, my little rabbit, there’s no escape.” Adam said in a predatory voice.

“Oh damn. What ever am I going to do?” Kris said huskily and rolled his hips, grinding their erections together.

Adam ground back and began moving his hips in slow, steady circles. “I think you’re going to do whatever I tell you to,” he whispered into Kris’ ear, “and right now I think you’re going to come and take a shower with me.”

Kris moaned and nodded helplessly.

Okay, that is definitely worth getting out of bed for.

“Best idea ever,” he said, but was unable to stop himself from wrapping his legs around Adam as they rutted against each other.

Adam reached down and held their cocks together as he thrust over and over.

“Don’t stop, yes…yes!”

But suddenly Kris felt firm pressure around the base of his dick. “Time to shower now,” said Adam and jumped out of the bed, giggling as he practically skipped out of the room.

“Oh no you didn’t! You are just full of evil this morning!” Kris yelled as his body tried to recover from being so cruelly denied.

“You know you love me!” Adam sang out.

Kris chuckled. It was something that he and Matt often said, a sign of their comfort with each other, and it made him happy to see Adam starting to relax and show the many sides of his personality. He was playful around his family. I’m part of his life now, too. Kris felt a warm glow at the thought and smiled broadly.

Wait a minute, what the hell am I still doing in bed? Shower sex…hello!

He scrambled up and hurried down the hallway, guided by the sound of the water running.

“What took you so long, gorgeous?” Adam purred when Kris drew back the shower curtain.

Oh my god. Naked, wet, soapy Adam…and he’s… Kris’ dick sprang back to life as he watched Adam stroke himself, foamy lather sliding down his chest and looking as if he’d just stepped out of the gay magazine that Kris used to jerk off to when he was a teenager. Something that sounded like “uhyeahwaaa” fell out of Kris’ gaping mouth and he drooled a little.

Adam continued to put on a show for Kris. He started to moan and arched his head back, exposing his long neck so that the water ran down it in little rivulets that made Kris want to lap at them. “Ohhh yeeaaahhh…” Adam groaned as he worked his cock. “that’s right, baby…uuhhhhhhh…” He caught his lower lip in his teeth, closed his eyes in pleasure and grunted with every pump of his hand, “mm…mm…mm…”

Kris’ eyes bugged out of his head and he wrapped a hand around his throbbing dick, pulling at it steadily as if he were watching a porn flick.

“So good,” Adam went on, “you want me, angel, you know you want all of this, don’t you?” He started thrusting into his hand and stared at Kris like a beast.
A string of saliva hung from Kris’ bottom lip and stretched down a foot before it broke free. “Guh,” was all he could manage. His mind was blank; nothing existed except the scorching beauty of Adam.

“Gonna give it to you, baby, gonna push it in nice and deep…uh…uh…uh…take it, take it…”

Kris stumbled forward, suddenly desperate to have Adam’s cock inside of him. He clambered over the side of the tub, bent over as far as he could, spread his cheeks with his hands and presented himself to Adam. He caught his breath as he felt something cool and smooth trickle down his crack.

“Such a good rabbit,” Adam murmured and started massaging Kris’ hole with his thumbs, lathering the body wash and pushing the tips of his thumbs inside.

Kris moaned and then heard the unmistakable ripping sound of a condom packet. A few seconds later, that glorious, full sensation was traveling deep into center of his body over and over.

The water hit the base of Kris’ spine and ran to his upside down head, making a waterfall in front of his face as it fell from his hair. *Holy shit, he’s fulfilling every one of my fantasies, one by one.* He groaned and spread his legs wider until they hit the sides of the tub.

“Hands on your thighs, baby,” commanded Adam. “Goddamn, your ass was made just for me.”

Thwack! A sharp sting exploded on Kris’ left cheek and his knees buckled. “Adam!…again, again,” he pleaded. SMACK! “UHH! Moremoremore…” Four more times Adam spanked him and then – Kris gasped so deeply that he sucked in a bit of water and coughed, which only heightened the sensation of a soapy, slippery finger pushing in alongside Adam's cock. “Oh god!” he cried out and moved to grasp his dick. But just then Adam removed his finger and pulled Kris up by the shoulders. All the blood rushed into his head and he leaned back against Adam to steady himself.

The water pounded onto his chest as Adam embraced him, jerking up into him so hard that he was forced to his toes again and again. A long fingered hand curled around his dick and he slumped backward while Adam jerked him off and blew his mind. An eruption of pleasure ripped through Kris’ body and he marked the tile walls with ribbons of cum.

“Fuck!” shouted Adam, now driving furiously and loosing his rhythm in wild abandon.

Kris was a fucked out rag doll held together by Adam’s dick and strong arms squeezing him tightly. His head lolled and his spent cock swayed to the frantic movements behind him. He knew somewhere in his hazy brain that Adam was on the edge.

“Goddammit!” With his last thrust, Adam lifted Kris right off of his feet.

*How did he get so strong?* Adam lowered them to the bottom of the tub and Kris lay back against him, feeling tipsy with love and reveling in the warmth of the water and Adam cradling him.

Adam started to kiss his neck and ears. “You are the most… amazing… sexy… hot… beautiful…” he said in between kisses. “I’ll never get tired of you, my angel, of touching you, being with you.”

*I love him. God, I hope he loves me, too.* “Me too, baby, me too,” Kris said softly. Adam squeezed him and then picked up the bottle of body wash and a cloth from the side of the tub.

“Let me clean you.” Adam took his time, gently soaping as much of Kris’ body as he could in their position. When he was done he stood them up slowly and they kissed and washed each other until the water started to run cool.

By the time they got out of the shower, their fingers and toes were wrinkled and Kris’ stomach gave
a loud rumble. “Got any cereal?” Kris asked as he wrapped a towel around his hips.

“Cereal?” Adam snorted. “Come on, you think I didn’t have this all planned out? I’m making omelets! Cereal...” He shook his head, pulled on a robe and opened the bathroom cabinet. “Here, you can use these for now, although I kind of like you in that towel,” he smirked, handing Kris a folded t-shirt and a pair of sweatpants.

“Wow, you thought of everything, didn’t you?”

Adam shrugged. “That’s just how I am, I guess. I like to be prepared.”

“I’m grateful,” said Kris. “Last night...this morning...Adam, it’s been so amazing being here with you. I hope...” I hope I can keep coming here, I hope that you love me. I hope that I won’t get my heart broken.

“What?”

“I...well, you work tonight, right?” Kris asked feeling somehow that he was about to push his luck.

“Oh baby, don’t you worry about that,” Adam said. He pressed his lips briefly to Kris’. “We’re not going back to the club room anymore. I want you to come back here, to my place now.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“And...do you, you know...” Shit, this is hard to ask. Kris took a deep breath. “Do you still need me to?”

Adam frowned, looking hurt and confused. “Don’t you want to be with me?”

“Of course I do! If I didn’t have to work or go to school, I’d be following you around like a horny, lovesick puppy!” Whoops! Well, that isn’t the same as saying I love you...oh jeez, please don’t let that freak him out.

“Lovesick?”

Kris shivered, hoping he was imagining the feeling of foreboding in his gut. “Yes, Adam, lovesick. And...well I don’t think I would recover if you...if one of those men...”

Adam’s eyes flew open in shock. “You think I would cheat on you? Oh my god, you don’t...you don’t trust me?” he asked with a note of panic in his voice.

Fuck! Why the hell did I say anything at all? “That’s not it, that’s not what I meant. Adam no, I trust you, I do.” He took Adam by the shoulders and looked into his troubled eyes. “I trust you.” I just think you're addicted to sex. “But what if I was sick and I couldn’t be there, what if they convinced you somehow?”

“Kris, I can’t believe this. I can’t believe you think I would do that to you,” Adam said sadly.

“I don’t think you would on purpose...it’s just...you seem to need me so much, need, you know, sex...a lot. I’m not complaining! I want it as much as you do, believe me! I’m only saying this because...because...” I LOVE YOU, YOU GORGEOUS IDIOT!

“Because you think I’m a damaged freak and I won’t be able to help myself, right?” Adam spat. He turned away roughly and tried to leave, but Kris held on to his shoulders.
“No, I do not think you’re a damaged freak! You’re a beautiful, amazing person and I couldn’t bear it if someone else touched you because I love you!” Kris, you stupid, stupid dope, what are you doing?

“You…you love me?” Adam’s eyes grew wide and he pressed his hand to his mouth.

Kris sighed and mentally kicked himself. *Might as well spill it all now.* “Yes. I love you. If I could, I’d spend every waking moment showing you just how much I love you.” He looked into Adam’s face and tried to figure out what he saw there. *Fear, anger, surprise?* But Adam’s expression was inscrutable. Kris dropped his gaze and prepared for the worst, but suddenly Adam threw him against the wall and kissed him so fiercely that his breath was stolen right out of his lungs. He clutched Adam tightly and put every ounce of love in his heart into the kiss. *Oh my heart, oh my Adam.*

Adam’s hands were everywhere, touching, grabbing, petting, holding Kris – trying to climb right into him. At last he pulled back and held Kris by the face. “Kris…Kris…angel…oh my god, you love me, you love me, you’re not leaving me, you love me.” Adam kissed him rapidly five times on the lips and then crushed him to his chest. *Please love me, too, please please please.* Kris felt a wet drop on his shoulder and raised his eyes. Adam’s face was aglow with joy; his eyes were squeezed shut and tears streamed down his cheeks.

“Adam…baby, I love you, but I can’t breathe.”

Adam chuckled and eased up a bit. “I’m sorry…I just…shit, I don’t think I’ve ever been this happy in my entire life. Kris…” He stepped back and wiped at his eyes. “You’ll soon discover that I am extremely loyal to the people I care about.”

*Care about? Care? And what about before? What about that one time?*

“I know that I have issues with sex. I know what you’re thinking, about that time after I had the flashback, but that was before…before I realized how much I need you, how much I…” He swallowed hard. *Please…say it.*

But Adam just shook his head and continued. “I might have to come to your apartment in the middle of the night, I may drag you out of a class or accost you at work, but I will never, ever be unfaithful to you. I don’t care how many men throw themselves at me, unless it’s you, they can all fuck off.” He stared deeply into Kris’ eyes. “Okay? Because…because, it’s just not going to happen because…I…” His voice dropped to a whisper. “I love you, angel.”

Upon hearing those words, Kris could not hold it together. He burst into tears and threw his arms around Adam. *He loves me, he loves me, he loves me!*

“Shhhhh, baby…I love you, Kris, I love you, I love you.” Adam murmured, stroking Kris’ head and back. He bent down and picked Kris up bridal style in his arms and walked back to the bedroom.

They made tender love amidst their tears and professions of devotion, eyes and bodies locked together on Adam’s bed. After crying out in mutual bliss, they wrapped their limbs around each other and kissed slowly until they became drowsy. Kris yawned, hugged Adam tightly and thought about the very first time he had been in this bed, and just how far they had come since that day.
“That was incredible,” Kris said as he finished off the omelet and patted his stomach appreciatively, “and way better than cereal. Thank you.”

Adam smiled, kissed him on the top of the head and picked up their plates from the table. *How weird is it that I like to take care of him?* But no one who really knew Adam would have found this odd in the slightest; he had displayed a kind and giving nature since he was a small boy. The present day Adam, however, was used to men doing whatever he wanted and trying their hardest to please him. *Everything is different with Kris.* Adam didn’t feel scared or vulnerable for wanting to make him happy. *So weird.* It was similar to a feeling he’d had a long, long time ago about… CRASH! The plates fell to the floor and he stood stock-still in the middle of the kitchen.

“Adam! Are you okay?” Kris jumped up from the table and rushed to his side.

“I’m fine…fine, Kris…” Adam shook himself, bent down and started picking up the larger of the broken pieces. *What the fuck? Where did that come from?*

“Are you sure? You look pale and shaky.”

Adam saw Kris’ worried face and felt ashamed for his moment of weakness. “It’s nothing, really, my hand just slipped.” But lying to Kris made Adam’s stomach turn. *It’s about trust, Lambert.* He sighed heavily. “Actually I remembered something, like that time we were at the Thai restaurant.”

Kris’ brows creased in concern, but all he did was kiss Adam on the cheek and start to help clean up. Adam felt relieved at Kris’ restraint in not asking about his memory. *Probably knows I wouldn’t want to talk about it. Damn, he’s so amazing.*

“Do you have a broom somewhere?” Kris asked, looking around the kitchen, “there might be some little pieces on the--”

“I love you,” Adam said cutting him off, and then embraced him in a passionate kiss.

Kris looked a little dazed after Adam released him. “I love you, too, my sexy beast.”

“A beast, am I?” Adam smirked. “Only because I’m so hungry for you, my little rabbit. I just can’t seem to get enough of you.”

“I am so not complaining, and the feeling is mutual. I’ll be your prey anytime.”

“Mmmmm, come here.”

They were just about to have sex amidst the remnants of brunch when they heard a loud knock at the door. “Fuck, whoever that is just made my shit list,” Adam said with annoyance. He pulled up his pajama pants and Kris hopped off of the table and grabbed the sweatpants he’d been wearing a minute ago. *It’s probably Neil. Ali knew not to bother me today.* But to Adam’s surprise, it was indeed a very nervous looking Alisan on the other side of the door.

“Ali, you know how much I love you, but you just interrupted what was about to be kitchen table sex with a man who is wearing my clothes this morning. That’s a serious offense, but if you leave now, I might still be able to--”

“You know I would never have come here today under normal circumstances, but I really need to talk to you.”
“That’s true, she never would have, and why does she look so worried? “Are you okay? Did something happen?” he asked, suddenly concerned.

“Can I come in? I know Kris is here, but this can’t wait, puppy.”

Adam let her in. “What’s wrong? You’re making me really nervous, Ali.”

“Who is it, Adam? Oh, hi Ali!” Kris said brightly as he came in from the kitchen. He looked at their worried faces and his smile faded.

“Why don’t we all sit down?” Alisan suggested. “Actually, I think it’s really good that Kris is here, too.”

Adam did not like this, not one bit. Whatever Ali had to say was serious shit, he was certain of it. He took Kris by the hand and they sat on the couch together. Alisan sat on an oversized chair opposite them. “I take it that you didn’t catch the evening news last night.”

“Why on earth would I watch the news when I have this gorgeous boy to play with?” He squeezed Kris’ hand and threw him the a little smile. Kris grinned and wiggled closer to him.

“Adam…honey, Sam escaped from prison yesterday.”

Adam felt nothing, thought nothing, and said nothing. He just sat on the couch and stared blankly at Alisan.

“What’s going on? Who’s Sam?” Kris asked, frowning as he tried to get a response from Adam. He reached over and touched him on the shoulder. Adam jumped up, looked around wildly and ran from the room.

“Adam!” Kris called after him.

But he ignored Kris and bolted into the bathroom. He slammed the door and locked it. No. No. This can’t be happening. This can’t…no. Not again! NO. Panic flooded him and he gripped his hair painfully as he began to pace. He tried to fight them, the memories that were just beyond his consciousness, the images and sounds that threatened to render him helpless. Someone knocked on the door.

“Adam, please come out so we can help you.”

Ali. Kris is out there, too. I can’t let him see me like this…weak, afraid…afraid… the fuzzy pictures were starting to get clearer, the voices louder. NO! I can fight them…I can…I’m strong…no, I’m weak, pathetic, a freak…they were right about me all along. And with that thought, the memories crashed down and he began to re-experience it all over again. “STOP PLEASE…NOOOOOOO!” he cried at the top of his lungs as he fell to the floor kicking and thrashing.

“Adam! Adam!” Kris and Ali were banging on the door now, but Adam didn’t hear them. He was seventeen again, fighting for his life as they raped him and beat him unconscious. “HELP ME PLEASE SOMEONE HELP ME!” Over and over the scene repeated itself in Adam’s mind, the worst flashback he’d had in two years.

Suddenly the bathroom door crashed open, splintering the frame. Kris flew in and dropped to Adam’s side. Alisan was right behind him. “Gently, Kris, gently.” They did their best to cradle Adam in between them as his limbs whipped around. Alisan leaned over and spoke right into Adam’s ear. “Adam. It’s Ali…you’re safe. Kris is here, too. You’re safe, Adam. You’re in your apartment with us…it’s not real, it’s not real.” She peered at Kris. “Talk to him, but don’t touch
him.”

Kris looked terrified but did as he was told. He brought his mouth to Adam’s other ear. “Adam, come back to me, baby, my love, come back. You’re safe…I’m not going to let anything happen to you. I love you. It’s not real. I love you. I love you.”

Abruptly Adam stopped flailing and froze. He opened his eyes and saw Alisan and Kris hovering over him. I’m okay. I’m okay. I’m okay. Oh my god, I’m not okay. Sam… “Sam,” he said in a scared voice.

“He’s not here, puppy. It’s me and Kris and you’re safe.”

Adam sat up and looked at them, feeling caught in a whirlwind of emotion. He was petrified of Sam coming after him again, ashamed that he’d not been strong enough to hold off the flashback and that Kris was seeing him so weak, so terrified. But then he remembered Kris’ words in his ear. *He loves me.* Why, Adam had no idea. *I’m a damaged freak, and Sam is going to come find me and…*

“Oh, Adam, my love,” Kris said with tears sparkling in his eyes, “you’re safe. Whoever this Sam is, we’re not going to let him hurt you.”

Adam wanted to believe Kris, but Sam had proven that he was determined. He had managed to break into Adam’s apartment two years ago in the dead of night armed with a shotgun. The only reason Adam was still alive is because he had been at Ali’s that night. He had suffered so badly after finding out that he’d ended up in a psychiatric hospital after threatening suicide when the flashbacks wouldn’t stop.

“W-where is he?”

“We don’t know, honey. The police are looking for him.”

“He could be anywhere! He could be on his way here right now! Ali!” Adam yelled and began to tremble violently. *He’s going to kill me.*

“He’s too busy running from the cops right now. There’s an enormous search party after him and they’re going to catch him and put him back in jail where he belongs.”

“If you think that, then why did you even tell me!” he cried.

“Because, I didn’t want you to find out when you were alone, I know how closely you usually watch the news.” It was true. Even when he had to work, he always caught up later with what was happening in the world around him because having information helped him feel in control.

Kris glanced at Alisan, who nodded, and then he put his arms around Adam, holding him tight and rocking him back and forth gently. “Shhhh, baby, it’s okay…it’s okay.”

Adam was torn; he was desperate for Kris’ comfort but felt mortified for needing it. *He loves me…he doesn’t think I’m a damaged freak and…and he’s not going to hurt me.* He had just realized why he’d dropped the plates earlier. He hadn’t been in love with Sam, but it had been close. He’d allowed himself to trust, to care deeply, and Sam had betrayed him and led him to torture and almost death. *He didn’t just lead me, he participated.*

All of a sudden, Adam needed to have Kris, right then. “I need you.” The urge was strong and undeniable, and he knew that the fear and shame would disappear with sex, with control. The more intense those feelings were, the more his need to feel powerful.
“I’m right here, baby, I’m not going anywhere,” Kris said soothingly.

“No. I want you. Now. In my bed.”

Kris was obviously confused. “Now? But…” Then his face cleared as if he had just understood something. “Oh, okay,” he said, nodding.

Alisan sighed. “Better you than some random stranger,” she said to Kris. “I’ll go, but Adam, I’m calling your parents and I’m coming back in two hours, you hear me? Also, I want you to contact Sheila as soon as you two are done.”

“Fine, fine,” Adam agreed because it was the quickest way to get her to leave and the necessity for dominating sex was becoming unbearable now, like a burning itch in his veins. He got up and followed her to the living room, hugged her briefly and then locked the door behind her. Kris was already in the bedroom, sitting quietly on the edge of the bed.

At the sight of him, Adam felt the itch grow intolerable. “It might get a little rough,” he said through gritted teeth.

“It’s okay. I’m ready and willing,” Kris said, smiling softly.

Adam growled and launched himself at Kris, throwing him down to the bed and tearing at his clothes. Must have him, I’ve got to have him now. Once Kris was naked, Adam started to bite him, to mark him on his neck, shoulders, and chest. Kris moaned and shuddered. “Yes, Adam, bite me…claim me.” He’s mine…mine. He sank his teeth hard into Kris’ neck and Kris cried out in a mix of pain and pleasure. Yessss. Adam got up, stripped off his clothes and went to his drawer to get supplies.

When he turned back to the bed, he saw Kris lying there, naked, with angry red marks all over his upper body and it jolted something in his brain. In the past, he’d never cared about the men he’d conquered, but Kris…I love him. Suddenly Adam was furious at the people who had tortured him and caused him to develop this need to dominate, to control men. He didn’t want that with Kris, and he was livid that the memory of them, of Sam, was fucking with his relationship with the man he loved.

“What’s the matter?” Kris asked, looking up from the bed.

Adam was paralyzed with indecision. “I can’t do this to you.” But I need it.

“It’s okay though, I don’t mind if you’re rough, in case you hadn’t noticed,” he said with a smirk.

“No, it’s not that…it’s…” FUCK. The horrible feelings continued to pulse throughout his being and he didn’t know how else to get rid of them, but even if Kris was willing, he didn’t want to use him like that. “FUCK! Fucking fuck!” he yelled at the ground.

Kris stared at him in bewilderment, but Adam didn’t know how to help him with that at the moment. He picked up the nearest thing to him, a bottle of nail polish on the dresser, and threw it with all his might at the wall. Hey, that felt good. He did it again, only this time it was a small lamp that flew across the room and smashed satisfyingly onto the floor. He felt the fear and shame abate as rage took over. **GODDAM MOTHER FUCKERS!** He screamed and flung a hairbrush at the window, shattering it to pieces. **HOW DARE YOU? HOW DARE YOU FUCKING DO THAT TO ME?**

Kris gasped as the glass flew everywhere. Adam turned sharply towards the sound, heart racing with adrenaline, and saw Kris’ shocked face. All at once, his dream came back to haunt him: “I can’t be
with you, Adam. You’re just a damaged freak. Good-bye!” “Nooooo! Come back, angel…don’t leave meeeeee!!! Anggeeellllll!!”

“NOOO!” Adam wailed, and fell to the floor, naked and weeping.

Kris leapt from the bed and ran to him. “Adam! Oh my sweet Adam!” He gathered him up in his arms and clutched him tightly, kissing his head and rocking him.

“I ruined everything!” Adam cried. “I hate them! I hate them!”

“Come on, my love, come with me.” Kris hauled Adam to his feet and led him to the bed, where he collapsed and continued to bawl loudly. What have I done? He’s going to leave me! Kris drew the blankets over them and spooned around Adam, covering as much of his body as he could with his own. He started to hum a soft tune as he stroked Adam’s head, face and arms.

“D-don’t leave me…p-please d-don’t leave me,” Adam choked out through his sobs.

“Oh baby, I’m not going to leave you…sshhhhhh, there now, I’m not going anywhere…I love you, remember? I love you, I love you,” he said and continued to hum softly.

He still loves me? “Y-you do?”

“Yes I do. I love you. It’s going to be all right.”

“I’m s-scared, angel,” Adam whimpered as his cries began to lessen.

“I’m not going to let anyone hurt you, baby. Didn’t you see how I kicked down your door? Angel is going to protect you, my love. Sam, whoever he is, he’ll have to get through me first.”

“He…” Adam gave a huge sniff and wiped his nose with the bed sheet. I’m safe. I trust him. I love him and he still loves me. “He was my boyfriend. He…hurt me.” Adam began to cry in earnest again.

Kris squeezed Adam even harder. “Baby, my sweet, sweet Adam, no one is ever going to hurt you like that again, not if I can help it.”

I don’t deserve him. I’m not worth this kind of goodness. He wept until he had no tears left and then lay there quietly, listening to Kris hum a soothing melody until he finally fell asleep.

The first thing he noticed when he awoke an hour later was that he was alone in his bed. “Angel!” he yelped loudly. He left me oh my god he left me no no noooooo!!! But then there were hurried footsteps in the hall and Kris appeared in the doorway.

“Hey, gorgeous.” Kris walked over to the bed and sat on it. He had changed back into his clothes from yesterday.

Adam tried to calm his breathing. “You’re still here,” he whispered.

“Of course I am, baby, I told you I wasn’t going anywhere. I was just in the living room talking to Ali.” He reached out and ran his hand down Adam’s cheek.

Now that he was awake and reassured, Adam remembered that Sam was still on the loose and was out to get him. He tensed and looked around the room as if he expected to see him there, but all he saw was that someone had taped up the broken window while he was asleep. “I’m sorry about that…about getting mad like that,” he said quietly.
“Don’t you dare apologize. You have every right to be angry.”

Adam looked up at him in amazement. “How do you always know the right things to say?”

Kris shrugged. “I love you.”

“I don’t deserve you,” Adam mumbled.

“What? What are you talking about? Of course you deserve me!”

Adam sat up and shook his head. “No, I don’t… I don’t know why you love me… I’m… not worthy of it. I’m just a damaged—”

“Stop this right now,” Kris said firmly. He shifted so that they were facing each other. “I love you because you are an incredible person. You’re funny and silly and childlike, you’re smart and talented, you have a kind and generous heart, and you’re the best lover I’ve ever had.”

“That can’t all be true, you’re just saying that to make me feel better.”

Kris put his hands on Adam’s shoulders and gazed into his eyes. “Do you honestly believe that I’d lie to you like that? Do you think that I can’t tell a beautiful person when I see one?”

Adam smiled weakly. “You forgot sexy.”

“Sexy doesn’t even begin to cover it, baby,” Kris chuckled. “You are the most gorgeous man I’ve ever laid eyes on. I love everything about you, down to the very last freckle.”

“I hate them.”

“I love them. They’re you, and I love you.”

Adam stared into Kris’ eyes and saw nothing but love and devotion there. Wow. “Well, I might be convinced if you kiss me right now,” Adam said as he leaned in to Kris. They wrapped their arms around each other and sighed before kissing deeply.

WHAM! Adam’s body gave an enormous start and then he clung to Kris, wide-eyed and afraid. “W—what was that?”

“It was just the front door. Ali ran out for a minute… that must have been her coming back in. She said she had a key. Shhhh… it’s okay.”

It’s not okay! His heart pounded against his ribcage. Fuck! I fucking hate this! Such a cowardly baby. “I can’t stand this, Kris. I hate being scared… I need to do something, anything.” I want sex, I want to break something…

“Why don’t you get up and get dressed, and then you can call your therapist. I’m sure she’ll know how to help. Plus, you’re mom is coming over soon.”

“My mom?” He tried not to feel embarrassed at the fuss they were all making; he knew he needed their support and he didn’t want to end up in the hospital again.

Kris nodded. “She should be here in about a half an hour.”

“Okay, I’ll be out in a minute.” He kissed Kris’ palm and held it to his face for a moment. “I love you.”
“I love you, too, baby.” Kris pecked him on the forehead and left.

Okay…okay, I can handle this. I’m surrounded by people who love me. I can do this. He got up and walked to his closet to find some clothes. I need to wear them…I need to. His hand hesitated only briefly before he snatched up a pair of sex pants. As he fastened the numerous hooks, he felt a little less afraid. Ten minutes later he stepped out of the bathroom completely dressed with his hair and makeup done perfectly.

“I went downstairs and told them you were sick and couldn’t perform tonight,” said Alisan when she saw his outfit.

Fuck, I totally forgot about work. Wouldn’t have gone anyway…what if he was there, waiting for me. Adam shivered and went to sit next to Kris on the couch. “Thanks, yeah…I just needed to, you know, feel normal.” Like wearing pants with hidden hooks is normal, Lambert. He told that voice to shut up and took a deep breath. “What’s the news…tell me, please, I have to know. Did they find him yet?”

Kris and Alisan exchanged worried glances. “No, puppy, they didn’t. But they will, I know they will.”

Adam tried desperately to push down the fear he felt at hearing this. He didn’t know what to do. He didn’t feel safe here. Sam got in to my last apartment, he can get into this one. But he was terrified to go anywhere else. “What am I going to do?” he said in a hushed voice.

Kris put an arm around him. “You’re going to call your therapist and I’m going to call the police.”

“But what can they do?”

“Ali told me how Sam broke in before, so we’ll tell the police that you think he’s after you again and they can help protect you.”

“They can?”

“Yep. My dad is a volunteer for the sheriff’s department back home, and he’s been on safety patrols before for people who felt like their life was in danger.”

Well that’s better than nothing. “I…thank you, both of you, for helping me like this.”

“Sweetie, you know there is nothing I wouldn’t do for you,” said Alisan.

Adam got up and hugged her. She squeezed him tight and then handed him the phone. “Call Sheila.”

He had to leave a message on Sheila’s voicemail and then he paced around his apartment, muttering to himself while he waited for her to call back. “It’s going to be okay. The police will help…he’s not going to get me. It’s okay to need help…it doesn’t mean I’m weak. Kris loves me and he’s not going to leave me. It’s going to be okay.” Over and over he repeated these phrases in an attempt to soothe himself while Kris was busy talking to the police on the phone and Alisan had run out to get them dinner.

“Adam, they’re sending someone over to talk to you, but they can’t get here until a little later tonight,” said Kris after he had hung up.

Just then Ali returned. “Hey, look who I found!” she said, smiling.

Adam stopped pacing and looked up to see his mom with her arms stretched wide. Oh thank god
“Mom,” he said, starting to choke up again as he walked to her.

“My sweet child,” Leila said. She put her arms around him and hugged him tight. He breathed a sigh of relief and clung to her without shame. “Everything is going to be okay, baby. We’re all here to help you. We all love you.”

Adam sniffed and pulled back. “Thanks, mom.”

“Any time, sweetie. Now, Ali brought Chinese so I suggest we all eat and try to relax a little… okay?”

Adam nodded.

“Kris, dear, it’s lovely to see you again. I can’t tell you how happy I am that you are here.”

“Yes ma’am,” Kris shook his head, “I mean, Leila.”

Leila chuckled and gave him a hug. They sat around Adam’s coffee table and ate, trying to talk about anything but Sam. Adam looked around the table and smiled fondly at them. They all love me. It’s going to be okay.

“So Ali,” Kris began, “why do you call Adam ‘puppy’?”

Alisan giggled. “You should have seen how cute he was, Kris. There was this adorable boy, Jacob, that Adam was crazy about in middle school.”

Adam rolled his eyes. “Oh my god, you are not telling him this story.”

“Awww…please?” begged Kris.

Damn, he is too cute with those eyes and that pouty lip.

“Fine.” Adam waved a hand at Ali and she continued.

“So they sat next to each other in Math class, right, and I sat behind them and I just knew that Jacob liked Adam, too. I always caught them staring at each other when the other wasn’t looking. But, Adam here, being the stubborn boy that he is, didn’t believe me. He whined at me for ages, just like a puppy, all sad because he thought Jacob didn’t like him.”

Leila and Kris chuckled and Kris rested his chin in his hands.

Adam wasn’t really listening to the story. He just stared at Kris. How is he so gorgeous?

“So one day, I got fed up with his whining and I stole his notebook, the one where he had written AL + JP on the front and drawn a heart around it. I walked into class the next day and plopped it right down on Jacob’s desk.”

“No, you didn’t!” Kris laughed.

“She did!” chortled Leila.

“Oh my god you should have seen Adam’s face when he saw Jacob staring at his notebook! And then, you won’t believe it, but after class was over and everyone else was gone, Jacob got up and kissed Adam on the cheek and then ran out of the room!”
“Awwww!” Kris cooed and beamed at Adam.

_I love the way his smile gets all crooked like that. Mmmmm, those lips._

“And then I had to listen to him whine some more because his mom thought he was too young to date.”

“Well, he was!” Leila chimed in.

“So yeah, Kris…puppy, for real,” Alisan finished and winked at Adam. “You know you love me.”

Adam huffed. “Okay, okay…if you’re done embarrassing me now…” He pushed away his empty plate and stood up. “Kris?”

“Yeah, baby?” Kris replied, still smiling.

“I have something to show you in the bedroom.”

Kris jumped to his feet with such enthusiasm that he almost knocked over his glass. Adam grabbed his hand and looked at his mom and Alisan. “Be right back,” he said and winked at them. “You might want to turn on some loud music.”

The two women laughed and got up. “I think we’ll go downstairs to the club for a while,” said Leila, “we’ll be back later.”

“In that case, I think we should pick up where we left off this afternoon.”

Alisan smirked and she left with Leila.

As soon as Adam got Kris into the kitchen he started to kiss him fervently. “So sexy, so cute,” he said into Kris’ mouth and then licked all around those full lips.

Kris moaned and lifted up his shirt.

Adam helped him get it off and pulled his own over his head. “So beautiful, my angel,” Adam whispered, running his hands up and down Kris’ naked back. He took a nipple into his mouth and sucked it, then worked his tongue in circles around it until it was a hard nub.

“Mmmm…Adam…baby…”

Adam growled and bit Kris’ nipple lightly before moving on to the other one. When that one was hard, too, he stopped and went back Kris’ mouth. They dipped in and out with their tongues and began to grind against each other. “These pants…are in the way, rabbit,” he said huskily. He popped the button on Kris’ jeans, unzipped them and slid them down far enough to shove his hands in and massage Kris’ ass.

Kris mouthed Adam’s chest and pressed his tongue firmly into the flesh, kneading it again and again. Adam squeezed his eyes shut in pleasure. “Get up there, angel.”

Kris wiggled his pants down some more and hopped up onto the kitchen table.

But they were denied this experience for the second time that day. A series of loud gunshots suddenly rang out from the street below and a woman screamed shrilly into the night. Every muscle in Adam’s body seized, and then he fainted and fell onto the kitchen floor.
Sometime later, he didn’t know how long, he opened his eyes to glaring florescent lights overhead. He put a hand up to shield his face. “Where am I? What happened? Angel?”

“Right here, baby. You’re in the hospital for observation. Everything is going to be all right.”

Chapter 21

Kris Allen was quickly learning how to act on life instead of letting life act on him, and he was determined to help Adam stamp out all that self-criticism and doubt. Why is it so hard for him to believe that I love him? How on earth can he think he’s unworthy of it? True, in his past Kris had always thought that if he did what other people wanted that they would love him, but he never felt that he didn’t deserve it when they did.

And being with Adam was completely different than any other relationship he’d been in. Kris supported him out of love, not because he was looking for anything in return. But somehow he’d known that Adam would love him back. What if he didn’t though? Would you still be with him? Yes, for a while anyway, but not forever… I wouldn’t put myself through that, not anymore. Huh. He silently thanked God for Adam’s love.

Kris gazed at him fondly, pale and sleeping in the hospital bed. He’s so brave, dealing with such an awful trauma. And he trusts me, after what Sam and those other bastards did to him, he trusts me, let me into his life. He didn’t know the details of Sam’s betrayal, but he could guess, and it made him angrier than he’d ever felt in his entire life. He’d had to push away that fury for most of the evening so he could support Adam, but it still seethed deep down inside of him. Sam is just damn lucky I didn’t get to him first.

Suddenly Adam’s eyes opened. He blinked a few times and put his hand up to shield his face from the glaring lights. “Where am I? What happened? Angel?”

“Right here, baby. You’re in the hospital for observation. Everything is going to be all right.” Kris pulled his chair closer to Adam’s bed and squeezed his hand.

“But I heard gun shots and a woman screaming and…and…” Adam tried to sit up but his body swayed alarmingly.

“Whoa, slow down there,” Kris said, steadying him and guiding him back down.

“What happened?” Adam looked like a like a little bird that had fallen from its nest.

Kris got up and sat on the side of his bed. He smiled and brushed the hair out of Adam’s face. “You fainted, my love, too much emotional distress and not enough oxygen to the brain. Your blood pressure was really low, but you’re going to be just fine. Adam, they caught him. Sam is going back to jail. That is, after he gets out of the hospital.”

“What…how…wait, this hospital?” He sprang forward but Kris pushed him back down again.

“Adam, it’s okay, it’s okay. You’re in the emergency room and he’s in surgery at the moment. Plus, there are two armed security guards watching over you right now.”
Adam looked around and saw the guards through the gap in the curtains. “Please…just tell me everything, Kris.”

Kris nodded. Shit, this is probably going to scare the living daylights out of him. He stroked Adam’s hand and took a deep breath. “They caught him trying to break into the back entrance of your building.” Adam went deathly pale but Kris plowed on. “Remember those police that were going to come and check on you? They found him when they circled the building and there was a fight. Sam got shot several times in the chest. The woman you heard screaming was just some club goer who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. She’s fine though!” Kris added hurriedly. “Just in shock.”

Adam opened and closed his mouth a few times but no sound came out.

“It’s all over, baby…no one is going to hurt you.” Kris leaned over and put his arms around Adam.

“You…you saved my life,” Adam said, trembling and gripping Kris. “If you hadn’t called the police…”

“Hey now, don’t think about that, you’re safe…it’s all over.” He pulled back a fraction and saw that Adam was staring blankly, exactly the way he had when Alisan had first told him about Sam’s escape, just before that terrible flashback. Oh no, not again.

“Adam,” he said firmly, “Adam!” Kris got up and threw the curtains back. “Sheila!” he called to the woman sitting in a chair nearby.

Adam’s therapist stood up quickly and hurried over. “Hold on to his hands, Kris.”

“But Ali told me not to touch him last time.”

“That’s when he was in the flashback…he’s not there yet, he’s dissociating and we need to stimulate his senses to ground him back to the present.”

Kris didn’t understand what she was saying, but he grabbed both of Adam’s hands and held them tightly. Oh please let this work…please don’t let him have to go through that again.

“Massage his hands and talk to him.”

“What should I say?” He rubbed circles on the backs of Adam’s hands and kissed them, too.

“Anything,” Sheila replied, “he just needs to hear your voice.”

“Adam, my love, it’s going to be okay. I’m right here and you’re safe. It’s your angel, your rabbit… I’m here for you, baby.”

Adam suddenly flinched. He tried to jump up from the bed, but Kris squeezed his hands. “Look at me, Adam…I’m right here…you’re safe.” Adam’s eyes darted around wildly and he began to breathe rapidly.

Sheila got a cloth from the sink by the wall, ran it under cold water and squeezed it out, then pressed it to Adam’s forehead. “Adam, you are twenty-seven years old. You’re in a hospital and it’s Friday, November 6th, 2009. You are not seventeen. No one is hurting you. Concentrate on the cool feeling on your head. Feel Kris’ hands on yours.”

Adam slowly started to move his fingers against Kris’ hand.

“Very good. Now look him in the eyes and listen to his voice.” She nodded at Kris.

“Adam, I love you, I love you…my beautiful Adam…I love you.” Adam finally focused his eyes on
Kris’ and heaved a great breath.

*Oh thank god! Thank god!*

“They were so close.” Adam reached up his arms for Kris, who gladly bent down and embraced him, feeling utterly relieved that Sheila had been here.

Sheila took the cloth off of his forehead and patted him on the shoulder. “You did a good job holding the memories off, Adam. I’m proud of you.”

“It’s only because you two helped me…I couldn’t have done it on my own,” he mumbled.

*Why does he always put himself down like that?* Kris shifted so that he could lie down next to Adam and cradle him.

“Give yourself some credit. It took strength of mind to push those thoughts and feelings away. Kris and I could not have done that for you. And with practice, you won’t need anyone else’s help.”

“Hmph. How did you know I was here anyway?” he asked her.

“When I called you back, your mom answered and told me what happened and I came as soon as I could.”

“When I called you back, your mom answered and told me what happened and I came as soon as I could.”

“Where is she? Where’s Ali?”

“They’re talking to the police,” answered Kris. “I can go get them if you want. They’ll want to know that you’re awake.”

“No! I mean, someone else can get them,” Adam said quickly and buried his head into Kris’ chest. *He’s so scared. I wish I could magically take that away for him.*

“I’ll go,” said Sheila. She left and returned in a minute with Leila and Alisan. They were relieved to see Adam awake and took turns bending over to hug him and offered words of comfort and support.

“Adam,” began Sheila after a minute of watching the reunion, “I’d like to have you transferred to the psychiatric unit.”

“What? No! I don’t want to go back there again so soon!”

She looked at him sharply. “So soon? The last time you were hospitalized was over eight years ago, unless you’re not telling me something.” She peered at Leila and Alisan, but they only nodded in Adam’s direction.

Adam flushed. “I…two years ago I…”

Kris suddenly put two and two together. *Oh my god, my sweet Adam, he was hospitalized that recently? Why did Sam even get released after only eight years of prison anyway? He should have been in there for life.*

Leila spoke up. “Sam broke into Adam’s apartment when he was released from prison two years ago, Sheila, but thankfully he was staying with Ali that night. When he found out what had happened, well, I’m sure you can imagine. Adam refused to let us contact you at the time.”

Sheila’s expression was both empathetic and stern. She sighed. “We are going to tackle that shame of yours, Adam.”
“Please, I don’t want to go back there…please don’t make me.”

She considered him seriously. “Are you feeling suicidal at all?”

*What? No, he can’t be…that’s too…* The thought of Adam wanting to end his life was almost too much for Kris to bear. He tightened his arms around Adam and prayed that it wasn’t true.

“No.” Adam looked up at Kris and smiled for the first time since he woke up. “No, I don’t want to die. I’ve got too much to live for.” He gazed at his mother and at Alisan, too. “A lot to live for. Please, Sheila, I’ll come to therapy every week, I’ll practice my skills, I’ll…I’ll even take medicine if you think I need it.”

Kris let out a breath he didn’t know he was holding. A tear leaked from the corner of his eye and he kissed Adam on the top of his head.

“Alright,” she relented, “but I’m referring you to a psychiatrist. You’re not leaving here without a safety plan and I want to talk to Kris before you go…okay?”

Adam nodded and snuggled into Kris. *This is going to be a long road, you sure you can handle this? Sure you want to do this?* Kris looked down at Adam and felt a fiery devotion burst into life within him. *Without a doubt.*

“Adam, honey, the police want to talk to you, they need a statement,” said Leila gently.

“That works out,” said Sheila. “Kris, why don’t you and I chat while Adam gives his statement?”

Kris tried to sit up but Adam tensed and clung to him. “It’s okay, baby, I’ll be right back.” He kissed him on the cheek. “I promise.” Adam loosened his arms but didn’t look happy about it.

Sheila smiled and led Kris out of the patient area and into a small office. She sat down in an office chair at the desk and motioned to a straight-backed chair in the corner. Kris sat down feeling a bit nervous, like he was being interviewed for something. “Kris, it’s obvious that Adam is in love with you and very devoted to you.”

“I feel the same way about him,” said Kris seriously.

She nodded. “I’m glad to hear that. You know, he’s very scared right now and he needs you, but I want you to realize that you can’t rescue him from his demons. He has to do that himself. Do you understand what I mean by that?”

“Yes, I think so. I can’t do the work for him.”

“That’s right, and I don’t want him to become dependent on you. Trust me, he wouldn’t want that either.”

Kris thought about all the times Adam had said that he hated needing help. “I’m sure you’re right about that, but what can I do to support him?”

“Love him the way you have been, encourage him to use his skills and his safety plan, and help him like you did earlier when he was dissociating.”

Kris frowned. “I didn’t understand half of what you said back there.”

“It means that he’s detached from his body and the world around him.”
“And that happens when something reminds him of his trauma?”

“Sometimes. Sometimes he might dissociate first and then have a flashback, or he might go right to
the flashback, and then again he could dissociate and never have a flashback at all. In either case, he
needs to be reminded of the present.”

“What’s the difference between them?”

“A flashback is when he is actually re-experiencing what happened to him. Sounds and feelings,
physical and emotional, it’s like he’s living through it again and it’s real to him in that moment.”

Kris gasped and Sheila nodded sympathetically. “I suggest that you do a little research on all of this
yourself, Kris.”

“Of course I will. So what are these skills you keep talking about, and what’s a safety plan?”

“They are tools Adam can use to cope with his symptoms, and the safety plan is a list of what to do
and who to call when he is having more difficulties than he can manage on his own.”

Kris tried to take it all in, to absorb all the information he needed to support his love. He suddenly
wanted to hold him again and started to fidget.

“One last thing, because I can see that you’re eager to go. It’s really important that you take care of
yourself and live your life. I know how much you love him, but you’ll be no good to him if you
neglect yourself, believe me.”

“I…I’ll try.”

“I know you will. Adam is really lucky to have you, Kris.”

“I’m lucky to have him, too,” he said and stood up. “Thank you, for helping him and for talking with
me.”

“It’s my pleasure. Now go back to him because I know you’re dying to,” she said with a smile.

Kris shook her hand and hurried back to Adam.

It was almost one o’clock in the morning by the time they got back to Adam’s apartment, but he
wouldn’t relax until Kris had bolted the door and pushed a large chair in front of it. Incredibly, when
at last they were cuddled into bed, Adam wanted to have sex.

“Are you kidding me? I am completely wiped out and you must be exhausted.”

“I am, but I just feel like I need to be even closer to you. I can’t explain it…please, angel.”

Yeah, like you can deny him anything.

It was extremely gentle, almost like they were just hugging as Adam slowly moved in and out of
Kris with the smallest of thrusts. They kissed sleepily, mouths tasting of stale Chinese food.
Eventually Adam became soft inside Kris and they fell asleep wound tightly around each other.

Around four in the morning Adam had a nightmare and Kris had to spend twenty minutes reassuring
him that Sam was not coming after him before he calmed down and went back to sleep.
That one, right there, that’s my favorite freckle. Kris touched Adam’s bottom lip ever so lightly so as not to wake him. I just want to lick it and suck on it all day long. As he lay there watching Adam breathe in the late morning light, it occurred to him that he was going to have to go home today, if for no other reason than to get more clothes. How long will he want me to stay with him? And we both have to go back to work. Kris thought about Adam performing tonight and wondered if he was even up for it.

“Mmph.”

“Morning sunshine,” Kris said and kissed Adam on his temple.

Adam smacked his lips and groaned. “I feel like I have a hangover.”

“Can I get you anything?”

“Kris, you’ve done so much for me,” he said sincerely, “how can I ever repay you?”

“I don’t want anything but your love, Adam.”

“Well you definitely have that. In fact, I seem to remember being rudely interrupted twice yesterday from doing something I know would help you feel my love,” he said with a smirk.

“Oh please can that be on our to do list today?” Kris said with his best puppy eyes.

“You better believe it, my little rabbit,” he growled and pinched Kris on the ass.

He giggled and swatted at Adam’s hand. “I’m glad to see you’re in a good mood this morning.”

“Well, I’m alive, aren’t I? And I have you in my life. That’s what I’ve decided to focus on right now,” Adam said, smiling.

I’m so proud of him…that would probably be weird to say, though. Kris just beamed at him and kissed him again on the head. “How about breakfast before we destroy the kitchen table?”

“You’re on. How about pancakes?”

“Really? I love pancakes!” Kris squealed.

“You are too adorable,” Adam laughed and pecked Kris on the lips. “Mmm, and I needed to brush my teeth like yesterday. Let’s get clean, then eat and then we can get dirty again.”

“Uhh, about that. Well, I’m kind of running low on clothes.”

Adam frowned. “Yeah, I figured you’d have to go home sometime. I mean you have work and school and everything, but…I don’t think I’m ready for you to go yet,” he said quietly.

Damn, I want that smile back. “How about this. Let’s save the pancakes for another time. I’ll go home and grab a quick breakfast and some clothes. And then…” Kris waggled his eyebrows suggestively. There it is! God I love making him happy.

“Hmm, well that sounds like an awfully long time that I have to wait to feel your tight ass around me, but…” Adam sighed dramatically, “I suppose I can make the sacrifice.”
“You are so kind,” Kris snickered.

“Oh the things I do for you, my sexy little rabbit.” Adam suddenly rolled over on top of Kris and pinned him to the bed. “But you better be fast about it. I want to finish what we started,” he said, staring hungrily into Kris’ eyes.

“Me too, and… I want it rough this time,” Kris said a bit shyly and pressed his thumb to the bruise on his neck. Certainly, he felt bolder when he was with Adam, but asking directly for things like that was pretty new. He had been amazed and touched yesterday when Adam had refused to use him. But it was so hot when he was rough!

“Oh my god! You can’t tell me that and then leave,” whined Adam. “Are you absolutely sure that you need clothes? I mean really, really sure? I know I have some cereal around here, too.”

Kris chuckled. “I swear I’ll be quick.” I need to check in with Matt, too.

Adam groaned and rolled off of Kris. “I am counting down the minutes. If you’re not back here in an hour…”

“What? You’ll punish me? Mmmm, I like the sound of that, maybe I’ll be late on purpose.”

“GAH!” Adam yelled and threw a pillow at Kris. “Go already before I change my mind and tear you apart right now!”

Kris caught the pillow and laughed. “I’m going, I’m going!”

An hour. Yeah, I’m never gonna make it. After reassuring Matt that he was still alive and that he might be at Adam’s for a few more nights, Kris still had to shower, change, pack a bag and appease his complaining belly. I’ll just get extra punishment then. He grinned to himself as he wolfed down a bowl of Frosted Flakes. None of Kris’ ex-boyfriends knew about his kinks because he had always done what they wanted, but he was damn excited to explore them with Adam. Wait until he finds out how much I like bondage.

He took the stairs two at a time and knocked on Adam’s door, bouncing eagerly on his toes. Adam threw open the door. “Holy shit!” Kris yelled and almost wet his pants at the sight of him. Adam was completely naked except for a pair of black boots and… a leather thong! Oh my fucking god… and a whip!

“You’re late,” Adam said gruffly, running the whip through his hand.

All Kris could do was whimper.

“Get in here.”

He staggered forward. Adam gave him the smallest wink, bolted the door and then grabbed his hand and pulled him into the kitchen. Kris felt like his brain was melting as he watched the muscles of Adam’s ass move when he walked.

The kitchen table was clear. Adam lifted Kris from the floor and set him on the table as easy as if he were a pitcher of lemonade. He wrapped the fingers of one hand tightly into Kris’ hair and pulled his head back sharply.

“So you like it rough, do you?” Adam asked.

Kris quivered and swallowed with difficulty. “Yes,” he whispered.
“I didn’t hear you, rabbit.”

“Yes,” he said louder.

“I think I’ll need to hear a little more enthusiasm than that,” Adam said and yanked Kris’ head back a little more.

“Yes! Please! I want it rough…please!” Kris shouted and begged.

“Mmmm, that was much better.” Adam stuck out his long tongue and licked Kris’ neck from the hollow of his throat all the way up to his bottom lip and then bit down hard. Kris gasped loudly and felt sticky wetness spreading in the front of his pants. He thought he might die from the utter sexiness of this moment. Adam continued to chew on Kris’ lip and then thrust his tongue inside Kris’ mouth over and over again like he was fucking it. Then he bit down on Kris’ tongue until he garbled out a cry out from the back of his throat.

*It’s like a wet dream. I’m never going to survive this.*

All of a sudden Adam let go of his hair and pulled him to the edge of the table. “How badly do you want it, baby?” He took Kris’ hand and rubbed it on his bluge. “How much do you want this in your sweet, tight ass?”

Kris was almost crying with the want pulsing throughout his body as his hand was moved in circles over Adam’s cock. “Pleewansobad,” he gibbered.

“Show me. Show me how badly you want it.”

He all but tore his shirt off and fumbled frantically at the button of his jeans while kicking off his shoes. Adam’s seductive, commanding mask slipped just a fraction, letting a tiny smile show on his lips as he watched Kris panic that he couldn’t get his pants off fast enough. But Kris was busy and didn’t notice, and by the time he was finally naked, Adam was in his role again.

“Very nice,” Adam said appreciatively, looking Kris up and down and licking his lips. He took the whip and drew it up Kris’ chest, letting it trail across his nipples.

“Oh god…oh g-OD!” he cried sharply when Adam snapped the whip on his thigh.

And then it was on. Adam manhandled Kris into position so that he was bent forward over the table with his hands gripping the far edge, stretching his upper body taut. He raked his nails down Kris’ bare back and dug them into his ass, spreading him wide and massaging his cheeks. Kris moaned and arched his ass in the air. Adam leaned over and took a big bite of his left cheek. “Yes! Adam…please, more!” Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! went the whip, leaving hot red lines on all over Kris’ smooth skin. “More…MORE!” But Adam seemed to be at his limit. He snarled, threw the whip aside and mounted Kris like an animal in heat.

Kris had one second to marvel at Adam’s preparedness…*he pulled that condom out of his underwear!*…and then he and the table lurched forward when Adam finally drove in. Over and over Adam scratched at Kris and bit his back as he humped him feverishly. Kris babbled and cried every time he felt the combination of pain and pleasure.

“Right…fucking…there!” Adam yelled and thrust again…again…again, harder and deeper each time. He picked up Kris’ legs by the thighs, wrapped them around his hips and leaned over so he could reach Kris’ neck to bite viciously at the bruise that was already there.

Kris let go of the table with one hand and pounded it on the surface, screaming and pleading. “Don’t
stop! Don’t fucking stop!…Fuck!” Kris came violently and abruptly without any stimulation to his dick and shot his load straight down onto the floor.

“Oh my fucking god! Did you just…” Adam swore through clenched teeth. The table skidded about a foot with his last thrust and he clamped his jaws onto Kris’ neck, moaning into his skin as he came.

Kris cursed again and then laid still on the table, feeling Adam’s weight collapse onto him and thinking that this would go down in history as the hottest fuck he had ever experienced in his life.

Chapter 22

Adam pushed himself up slowly, lightly grazing the criss-crossed marks and bites all over Kris’ body with his fingertips as he rose. Kris shuddered and moaned but didn’t move otherwise. *Holy shit, wish I’d known he was into that before…we are going to have so much fun!* He smirked, thinking about all the things in his closet that would drive Kris wild. He bent over and kissed him on the small of his back. “Can you move yet, angel?”

“Ungh.”

Adam chuckled, helped Kris roll over and pulled him up to a sitting position on the table. Kris’ hair was sticking out all over the place and his eyes were glazed. *So sexy, all fucked out like this.* He reached out for Adam and they embraced to kiss tenderly, tongues gliding softly. After a minute Kris pulled back and looked into Adam’s eyes. “That was…I don’t even know,” he said hoarsely and shook his head. “That was the first time anyone ever…” he trailed off.

“Seriously?”

“Well, I used to be, you know, a lot less assertive and I just never really asked for it before.”

“And here I was thinking you were just some innocent tie seller. I had no idea you were into kinky stuff like that, you dirty, dirty angel.” Adam leered. “You can just keep right on asking for it.”

Kris grinned slyly. “I have quite a few kinks that I’m eager to try with you.”

F*uck, he’s going to be the death of me.* He leaned his forehead against Kris’ and reached down to stroke a long finger down his soft cock. “Can’t wait.”

Kris shivered and kissed Adam’s bottom lip. “I love you.”

Don’t think I’ll ever get tired of hearing that. “I love you, too, angel.”

“I think I need to get dressed before I get permanently stuck to this table,” Kris said and then pointed to the floor sheepishly, indicating the pool of cum. “And sorry about that.”

“Are you kidding me? That was the best sex compliment I’ve ever gotten!” *I didn’t touch his cock! I’m not even going to clean it up yet.*

“You deserve it,” said Kris fervently, “that and every good thing anyone has said about you.”

Adam grew quiet and looked away. The truth was that he knew somewhere deep down inside that Kris was right, that he was worthy of praise. That knowledge spoke in his parents’ voices, telling
him that he was beautiful and smart and valuable, but they were so buried that Adam only heard them clearly in random moments spread out over the last decade. For the large part his own voice was missing, with the exception of an occasional acknowledgement that he was good at sex and singing. The only things I’m good at. The constant war between his pride and self-criticism was exhausting. “I think I’ll get dressed, too,” he said, turning away, but Kris stopped him with a light touch on his arm.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.”

Adam noted his worried face and smiled, not wanting to make a big deal of it. “It’s okay, baby.” He pecked Kris on the cheek. “Why don’t we put your things in my bedroom?”

Kris grinned brightly at that. “So, how are you feeling about working tonight?” he asked after they had cleaned themselves up a bit and dressed. He sat down on the edge of the bed and pulled Adam down next to him.

Huh. As much as he wanted to return a sense of normalcy, Adam couldn’t suppress a sudden urge to tell his boss to fuck off for purposefully whoring him out. Plus, there was still a part of him that was very nervous at the idea of leaving his apartment, even though Sam was probably still in the hospital. Hope he dies from those gunshot wounds. Ugh, don’t think about him. He must have been staring off into space a little too long, because Kris put a finger under his chin and lifted it so that their eyes met. He felt his body relax as he gazed into those deep pools of brown.

“Penny for your thoughts, lover,” said Kris softly.

“I don’t know how I feel about it. I’m so happy being here with you. I wish we could just ignore the rest of the world and make love until we can’t move anymore,” he chuckled and flopped back onto the bed.

Kris snuggled up to him. “Yeah that wouldn’t be so bad, but what about singing? Isn’t that important to you, too?”

Adam pouted and put an arm around Kris. “Aww, don’t be such a killjoy. Come on, twenty-four-seven sex?” he sniggered, but then heaved a sigh when he sensed that Kris was still being serious. “Of course it’s important to me, but I’m not sure I want to keep working at place that is starting feel more like…like…”

“Like you’re not being appreciated for your artistry?” offered Kris.

“Exactly,” Adam nodded, relieved that he didn’t have to spell it out. “I mean, I’m a good singer, I can get another job…right?” he asked anxiously.

“Adam, do you really need me to answer that?”

Fuck, when did you become such a pussy, Lambert? You don’t need anyone, not even Kris, to tell you that you that you kick ass. “No. I know I can get another job. I’m a fucking awesome singer,” he stated resolutely. An uncharacteristic impulsiveness suddenly bubbled up inside him. “So that’s it then, I’m quitting my job…tonight.” Why wait? Adam could honestly say that all the drooling men did nothing for him anymore; all he wanted was Kris.

Kris looked a bit shocked, clearly not expecting that last part. “Umm, well I don’t doubt that you’ll find work pretty fast, but don’t you need to, you know, pay rent and everything?”

This is where things got a little sticky. Adam’s family happened to be very well off and he had grudgingly accepted his parents’ help in the past, but he hated feeling dependent on them. He prided
himself on being able to make it on his own and not needing anyone. You need Kris. That’s
different…I don’t need him for money. Point, but still, you haven’t needed anyone in a long, long
time, for anything. What about Ali? Oh come on, you know it’s not the same. Fine, so I need him, so
what?

“Baby?”

“Sorry, angel, I keep getting sidetracked. I’m going to be fine money wise, I’ll just get a loan from
my folks until I can pay them back when I find a job,” he said casually and then quickly changed the
subject. “Now, I think I’d like to make my last night of work special…you know, go out with a
bang,” he began, but then flinched when he heard loud knocking. It’s just the fucking door… jesus,
stop cringing at every little sound! He sighed and got up, then walked slowly towards the living
room, trying not to seem like he needed Kris by his side but feeling grateful that he was. He squinted
through the peephole and grinned. “Who is it?” he sang in a high falsetto.

Rich laughter came from the other side of the door in response. “Someone who helped bring you into
this world!”

“Gross, dad,” came Neil’s voice, “now I’m going to think about you and mom having sex and that is
just all kinds of wrong.”

Adam and Kris laughed together. Adam let them in and gave them each a hug. “We’re just dropping
to check in you, son, and to deliver some news,” said Eber, “Kris.” he nodded, shaking Kris’ hand.

“Yeah and we wouldn’t say no to lunch, either,” Neil added. Suddenly Kris’ ears went bright red
and he scampered into the kitchen. Adam bit back a laugh, knowing that Kris was running to clean
up the ‘mess’ on the kitchen floor. “What’s up with him?” asked Neil.

“Oh, I think he’s just picking up something he dropped earlier,” Adam smirked. “Come
in.” Actually, this is perfect timing. I can ask dad for a loan today and I just know that Neil can help
me plan something cool for tonight.

“Seriously, bro…you doing okay?”

Adam glanced from his dad to Neil, taking in their concerned faces and tried to manage the ever
conflicting feelings of shame and gratitude. He shook his head as if he were trying to push each one
into a separate corner of his brain to break up the fight. “I’m fine, really, and Kris is keeping me
company.” It was odd. Now that he’d finally let Kris into his apartment, Adam didn’t want him to
leave. He has a life, too, you know. Plus, you wouldn’t want him here all the time, would you?

“So what’s the news you mentioned, dad?”

Adam blinked and said nothing. He could escape again…he could, and then… his breathing became
shallow and rapid all of a sudden. Distant images were skimming the edge of his mind like a hazy
mirage.

“Son? Oh no…Neil, grab his attention, quick.” Eber said to his younger son who was closer to
Adam.

Kris walked in from the kitchen, looked around and moved swiftly past Neil to stand in front of
Adam. “I got this,” he said and took Adam’s hands, rubbing them firmly. “Adam, hey baby, I’m
right here. I love you.”
Fight them fight them fight them got to...huh? Kris’ words seemed to have banished the approaching memories in Adam’s head and he snapped his eyes into focus. “I…fuck.” He ran a trembling hand over his eyes and felt rage building up again the way it had yesterday, only this time it had skipped right past the fear and shame. “I need to…” He yanked his hands out of Kris’ and began to pace with clenched fists.

“Oh god, Adam, I’m so sorry. I just wasn’t thinking...what can we do to help?” asked Eber.

“Please -- dad, Neil...just go. I’m really grateful that you stopped by, but...” He ground his teeth together.

I’m going to start breaking things in a minute.

Kris took charge. “It’s okay, Mr. Lambert, I can handle this.” Kris led them to the door and thanked them, adding that he would ask Adam to get in touch later.

Fucking bastards...goddam assholes... mother fucking bastards! Adam dug his nails into his palms until it hurt, trying to cope with the tsunami of fury that was demanding to be unleashed. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Kris pick up something large and move towards him with it. It was a couch pillow. “That’s not gonna cut it!” Adam yelled, purposefully avoiding Kris’ eyes because he knew they would be full of fear.

“Adam. Look at me. I’m not scared and I’m not going anywhere. Let it out.” And just like that, his wrath was too much to hold. “FUCK! FUCKFUCKFUCKINGFUCK! WHAT THE FUCK WHO THE FUCK DOES THAT...MOTHER FUCKING BASTARDS!” He snatched up a book lying on the coffee table and hurled it against the wall. A remote control was next, followed by a picture frame. Not enough...it’s FUCKING NOT ENOUGH!

“GODDAMMIT!” he screamed so loudly that it felt like his throat was tearing. He whipped around and kicked the couch viciously, then began to pummel every inch of it. “HOW DOES THAT FUCKING FEEL YOU FUCKING BASTARDS YOU GOD DAMN ASSHOLES! YOU RUINED MY LIFE! DIE DIE ALL OF YOU GO TO FUCKING HELL I HOPE YOU ROT IN PRISON! I HOPE YOU SUFFER YOU BASTARDS! I HOPE YOU HURT JUST LIKE I DID YOU FUCKERS!”

Adam tore into the couch with his fists and feet until he wore himself out physically and emotionally and slid to the floor, sweating and gasping for breath, unsure if it was sweat or tears stinging his eyes. He flinched a little when he felt warmth next to him, but then grabbed Kris’ arms and pulled them tightly around his shaking body. He’s still here. He said he wouldn’t go and he didn’t. He loves me. He loves me. He loves me. Adam repeated this mantra in his head as the pain in his lungs began to fade and his breathing evened out. He suddenly realized that, strangely enough, his tirade had purged him of a tiny thimble of the poison he’d been carrying around for a decade. Wow. I need to get pissed off more often.

Kris kissed the back of his sweat-drenched neck and rocked him a little. He loves me. Adam tried to speak, to tell Kris that he loved him, but all that came out of his ruined throat was a scratchy groan.

“Shhhh, it’s okay...don’t talk right now, just relax,” said Kris soothingly.

He’s so patient, so understanding. For what felt like the thousandth time, Adam thought about how lucky he was. He kissed Kris on the arm and wondered how he could ever give back enough. I’m sure as hell going to try. Slowly, Adam sat up and attempted to express himself again. “I...love you...angel,” he croaked.

Kris’ eyes were shining with unshed tears. He stroked Adam’s glistening cheek and whispered, “I love you, too, baby.”
Two hours later, Kris was laughing fit to burst at Adam’s antics in the studio. After drinking a ton of throat coat tea and resting his voice while watching TV with Kris, he was now doing an impression of Kanye West set to an electronic beat. “How could I be so heartless…poor Taylor Swift yo…but you’ll never find nobody better than Bee-oh…” I love his laugh, so adorable! It gave Adam immense pleasure to see Kris being carefree rather than worried about him. Yeah, sex face and laughing face...definitely my favorites, oh wait, then there’s loving face and cute face, too. Adam ended his rendition of Heartless and took a bow while Kris clapped and whooped, still chuckling. Being in the studio reminded Adam that he had unfinished business to attend to. I promised Ali I’d get back to work on those tracks weeks ago! He made a mental note to do some recording tomorrow.

“That was hilarious! And you are so talented, even when you’re mocking someone,” Kris said with a huge smile.

Adam grinned and checked the time. It was nearing five o’clock, when he usually began his pre-work routine. He was always alone when he got ready and he wasn’t sure how it would feel to have Kris around for that. Of course, he’d already made some changes to his regimen like stocking fewer condoms in his back pocket and bringing his blanket down to the club room, but the biggest difference by far was that Adam thought about Kris from the minute he began his push ups until he was done with his last song. “So, I usually have these, ah, things I do before work,” he said to Kris awkwardly.

“Oh? Umm, do you want me to leave and meet you downstairs later?”

Adam leaned back in his chair and thought about it. He hadn’t been alone since Sam’s escape and if he was being completely honest with himself, he didn’t want to be. Having Kris around was extremely comforting, but something about Kris watching him exercise and meditate didn’t sit well with Adam. “Could you maybe just, you know, hang out in the living room? I don’t really want you to leave, but…” He trailed off and looked nervously at Kris.

“Of course I’ll give you some privacy. We don’t have to be attached at the hip all the time.” Adam breathed out a sigh of relief. “It’s no problem,” continued Kris, “besides, I think I saw a home movie labeled ‘Adam’s First Birthday’ that looks pretty interesting -- I’m kidding, I’m kidding!” he laughed and then ran when Adam came at him with tickle hands.

Murmurs and whispers broke out all over the room when Adam and Kris walked into the club hand-in-hand and sat down at the bar together. Adam lifted his chin in the air proudly and ignored them. He’d been worried that all the noise and people would be scary, but it was so familiar that he felt only a little jittery, and he made sure that some part of his body was always in contact with Kris. He and Kris ordered a small meal and talked about what he should do for his last night, which mostly turned out to be Kris listening and laughing as Adam came up with a list of ideas, each one crazier than the last. People in the club were shocked to see him relating so comfortably and intimately with another man, and they made excuses to get closer to the couple to verify that it was indeed the same
man Adam had been choosing for weeks now.

“I can’t believe that he has a boyfriend.” “Never thought I’d see the day.” “Wonder what will happen now?”

Adam tried to block out the barely hushed voices and concentrated on Kris, on his smile, his sparkling eyes and the way that love radiated from them. They’re all idiots. Let them gossip, I don’t care. I have Kris and that’s all that matters. Besides, why should I be ashamed of doing something as normal as having a boyfriend? Yeah, this anger thing is good. “Ooh! I’ve got the perfect idea, Kris! Instead of doing something off the wall, I think I’m going to have a nice little chat with the audience after I perform. I know exactly what to say, too.”

Adam’s performance that night was truly spectacular, so genuine and full of life that even the crowd of hopeful men stopped throwing their little papers for a minute to take notice. “Thank you! Thank you!” Adam called amidst all the cheering and clapping. “Thank you so much!” He took another bow and then cleared his throat. “I have a little announcement to make tonight.” The cheering subsided quickly and the audience collectively leaned forward to hear what the magnificent Adam Lambert had to say. “Ahem. Well first off, I’d like to truly thank those of you who have come here just to hear me sing. I’m grateful, and I hope to see you again in the future when I’m performing somewhere else, since tonight was my last show here.”

The crowd gasped in shock and the men looked as if all their dreams had been crushed. “Yes, that’s right, I am leaving this club for good.” Adam deliberately caught the eye of the club manager…the little fucker…and sneered at him. His anger was now clearly visible for all to see. “To those of you who have come here with the sole purpose of hoping for a good fuck, you can just take your pathetic asses to the nearest corner! There are plenty of fine whores out there and I am not one of them! Not anymore!” A few of the men actually sobbed and ran out of the club.

“No really, it was so wonderful, everything you’ve done for me,” he continued loudly, his voice dripping with sarcasm as he stared daggers at the manager again, “but no fucking thanks!” he yelled, kicking at the papers on the stage. He breathed heavily into the microphone and then closed his eyes briefly, trying to regain a little composure. “One last thing before I leave. Kris, where are ya, baby?” Kris waved his hand and everyone turned to look at the luckiest man in the room. “I love you!” Adam called and blew him a kiss.

Kris’ smile lit up the entire room. “I love you, too!” he hollered back.

Adam was flying high, empowered by his righteous indignation and consumed with love for Kris. Giggling like five-year-old boys, they ran up to Adam’s apartment and fell on each other immediately, laughing and kissing on the beat up couch. “Did you see my boss’ face? He was totally shitting himself!” Adam cried, still cracking up at his own daring. He grabbed Kris and pinned him to the sofa with a sizzling kiss.

“I know! You were brilliant!” Kris snickered after recovering his breath, then gazed up at Adam and smiled softly. “This might sound weird but…I’m so proud of you.”

“Yeah, I mean…I think I’m proud of me, too. But Kris, it’s all because of you.” It is. I never would have been able to do this if it weren’t for him. I couldn’t have been that brave without him.

“No, Adam. That was you standing up for yourself tonight.”

“You were my inspiration, angel. I owe you so much, so much.” He hugged Kris fiercely and then lapped at his bruised neck, licking circles around the mark and tonguing it repeatedly.
“Baby… you don’t…ohhh yeah, right there…you don’t owe me anything,” Kris finally managed to get out. “You are…mmmm, don’t stop…strong, all by yourself…ohhhh god.”

*I’m strong all by myself: I did it. I showed them I’m not just a piece of meat!* Adam felt powerful, but in a different way than he usually did. He didn’t quite understand what it meant, but reveled in the sensation nonetheless. Oddly enough, this new kind of power made him feel even safer with Kris, if that was even possible. *I wonder if he would…no, he wouldn’t want to, would he? Only one way to find out.*

“Kris…angel…” He stopped ravaging Kris’ neck and sat back. “Would you…I mean, have you ever…” Adam puffed out a breath and ran a hand through his hair. *Come on, where’s that courageous spirit? Shit, this is harder to ask for than I thought it would be.* He had always gotten what he wanted by commanding someone to do it, never by requesting it.

Kris tried to catch his breath and then smiled. “Ask me anything, lover, I’ll do anything for you,” he said.

“How could I forget?” Kris said, shuddering. “Oh! Do you want me to--”

“Only if you want to!” Adam rushed out. *Oh please oh please oh please!*

“Are you kidding me? Jesus, Adam, I’ve been dying kiss you everywhere, and I mean everywhere,” he said with a wink.

*Oh my god, this is really going to happen!* He flushed pink and started to breathe quickly with excitement. “Okay, okay…but, but only your tongue…okay?”

“Of course, whatever you want.”

Adam stood up and shook his hands several times, trying to fling away his nervous energy. “How should I do this? Where should I be?”

Kris smiled fondly at him. “It’s going to be okay. Do you want me to, um, direct things a bit?”

“Yes, I think so.” *Well that is a serious departure, isn’t it…you sure about this? I trust him and I want it…I want to feel his tongue right there…fuck…*

“Don’t worry, I’ll treat you right, baby,” Kris said in a gentle voice.

“I know you will.” His stomach was still crawling madly with butterflies because no one in ten years had ever approached that area of his body; he’d never allowed it.

Kris stood up and kissed him tenderly while unhooking Adam’s sex pants easily with one hand. He took off his own shirt and pants first though, and Adam was grateful for it.

He ran his hands up and down Kris’ body and fingered the small welts on his back, pressing firmly and drawing out long moans from Kris. “Undress me, angel,” Adam said quietly.

It seemed that Kris was fighting back tears as he knelt down and lovingly removed Adam’s boots one at a time. Adam stood with his hands on Kris’ shoulders for balance and felt so loved, so cared for already that he knew everything was going to be okay. When he was finally naked, Kris motioned for him to sit on the very edge of the couch and lean back. “I want you to be able to see me, baby. I’m going to make you feel so good.”
This is it... last chance to back out. No, I’m not scared. I’m safe and it’s going to be fucking amazing. “Do it. I’m ready.”

“Not so fast, got to get you a little warmed up first.” Kris grinned and took Adam’s semi-hard cock into his mouth, running his tongue up and down the pulsing vein underneath.

“Ohhh god, baby, you’re so good at that,” Adam moaned, feeling his dick spring to attention. He looked down and saw Kris’ mouth stretched around him. So sexy, so beautiful. Adam touched a finger to those full lips and quivered hard enough to send the butterflies on their way. Kris pulled back a little and wrapped a hand around the base of Adam’s dick, then moved both hand and mouth up and down slowly, using spit and pre-cum as lubrication. “So fucking good, angel.” Adam relaxed back into the couch and let his hands fall to his sides, giving in completely to the incredible pleasure sweeping throughout his body. World class... I’ve got to get him to teach me how to do that.

Kris sped up for a few strokes and then popped off softly. He licked slowly down Adam’s shaft and swirled his tongue around his balls before drawing one into his mouth and rolling it around. “Oh my...fuck, baby...ohhh yessssss,” Adam hissed and arched his back.

“Knees up, lover,” said Kris, replacing his mouth with his hand. He continued to stroke Adam and play with his balls while he waited.

Adam nodded and lifted his feet from the floor. He opened his legs and hooked his arms under his knees, drawing them back as far as he could. I’m exposed, but it’s okay. He’s going to take good care of me.

Kris helped him scoot forward so that he was almost on his back with his knees by his ears.

“You ready?”

“Absolutely. Give me that sweet tongue of yours, angel.”

Kris licked his lips eagerly and kissed Adam on his left cheek, his inner thigh and then right over his crack. He spread him open gently, lovingly, and looked up. Adam held his breath and knew that his eyes were wide, not with fear, but anticipation. Do it do it do it do it do... “OH!” he gasped when he felt the soft wetness press against his hole. He looked down and saw a wide grin stretch across Kris’ face.

“More?”

“Fuck yes!” Adam said enthusiastically. Shit! I have seriously been missing out!

Kris went to town then, tonguing, licking, and slurping at Adam like a man dying of thirst.

“Holy fucking shit...oh my god...angel, moremoremore!” But just then Kris drew back and ran his tongue all around his lips. “Fuck, why did you stop?” Adam asked, panting heavily.

“Just wanted to make sure you were enjoying yourself,” Kris said a little smugly.

Adam stared at him in disbelief and then narrowed his eyes. “You know I am, you little punk! Now get back down there and don’t be so gentle this time!”

Kris chuckled and returned to his task at once. He pried Adam apart as far as he could and thrust his tongue like a dick straight into his hole. “Goddamnit!” cried Adam, arching his back and spreading his legs even more. He reached down, threaded his fingers into Kris’ hair and began to fuck himself with Kris’ tongue over and over again. “Uh...uh...uh...” he grunted each time he felt that glorious pressure and wetness enter him. Kris’ drool slithered down Adam’s crack and dripped onto the floor.
Adam couldn’t take it anymore; his cock was aching to be touched. He let go of Kris’ head and pulled at his length repeatedly. Kris buried his face between Adam’s cheeks and continued to tongue-fuck him. “Oh god…oh…Kris!” Just as Adam was about to come, Kris leaned forward and swallowed him down, sucking firmly as if he were trying to draw out Adam’s cum. “Oh fuck! Yes! Yes…UHHHH!” Adam thrust into Kris’ mouth and came undone completely, sobbing out his lover’s name as Kris drank him.

Adam flopped onto his side, quaking and wheezing for air. Jesus fucking Christ! Sex will never be the same again! “Angel,” he breathed.

“Right here, baby,” Kris smiled and sat down on the edge of the couch, but Adam could tell he was in pain; his cock was rigid against his belly.

Adam sat up and kissed him. Tasting something musky mixed in with the familiar, he pulled back with a start, but then realized that he was tasting himself on Kris. He dipped back in and absorbed his own flavor. It wasn’t unpleasant, just different. You’ve got to take care of him now. “Oh my poor angel, let me help you out. I’ll be right back, okay?” He walked to his room, weaving a little on unsteady legs, and came out with a bottle of lube. “As much as I’d love to reciprocate right now, I think you just blew my mind. I’m amazed I can even walk around.”

“Don’t worry about it,” said Kris. “I’m just happy that you’re happy. I can take care of myself.” He held out his hand for the lube but Adam shook his head.

“No way, gorgeous. I think I can manage a decent enough handjob.” He sat with his back against the arm of the couch, stretched out his legs in front of him and opened them a bit. “Come here,” he said, patting the spot between his legs. Kris look immensely relieved. He climbed up and nestled back into Adam.

Adam wrapped his legs around Kris and drizzled some lube onto his twitching, leaking dick.

“Whoo! That’s cold!” Kris gasped.

“Mmmm, don’t worry, rabbit, it’s about to get hot in here. I am so loving this position, too. I’ve got perfect access to your neck now,” Adam chuckled wickedly.

Kris groaned and let his head fall back against Adam’s chest. “Stop teasing already! I’m dying here!”

“Aww, sorry, angel,” Adam cooed. He opened his mouth and positioned it right at the back of Kris’ neck, then hovered his hand an inch away from its target. He let two seconds pass and then bit down and clutched Kris’ cock at the same time.

Kris drew in a sharp breath and moaned. “I’m not going to…last long…like this.”

Adam didn’t reply. He worked his thumb around and around Kris’ slit while nibbling and licking his neck, purposefully laving at the bruise every so often.

“Ohhh Adam, my love…yesssss...”

Adam poured out a little more lube and gripped Kris tightly as he stroked, up and down, up and down, squeezing at the base and running his thumb over the head each time.

“Baby…yes, more…please…faster Adam…” Kris panted. Beads of sweat broke out on his temple and dripped down his neck. Adam caught one on his tongue and latched his mouth onto Kris’ neck, making a second mark to match the first. He sucked hard and buried his teeth into flesh until Kris howled and began driving up into Adam’s hand. “Yes…faster…faster…harder…bite me, bite me!”
he yelled.

Adam growled and bit Kris so hard that his teeth pieced skin and drew blood.

“Fuck yes!” Kris screamed and thrust his dick up one last time before he came. His cum pumped out in spurts all over his stomach and then he slumped back into Adam’s arms.

Adam was breathing heavily again and there was definitely life in his cock after Kris’ little display. “Wow, angel…you weren’t joking around about having kinks!” Kris just groaned in reply. Adam cuddled him close and took a few deep breaths until his dick relaxed again. Soon they began to doze off with Adam’s hand still curled around Kris’ soft member.

Adam woke in the middle of the night and carried his lover to bed. After tucking him in, he got a washcloth and sat down on the bed to gently clean the dried blood from Kris’ neck. As he gazed at his love, it occurred to him that he’d been so focused on trusting Kris that he hadn’t realized how much Kris must trust him, too. He sighed and wiped a tear from his eye. Maybe I can have a good life after all.

Chapter 23

“I know, baby, I know…but I have to go back to work tomorrow morning.”

It was nine o’clock on Sunday night. Kris and Adam were standing in the middle of Adam’s living room locked in each other’s arms. Kris’ bag was packed and sitting by the door ready to go.

“Please don’t leave,” whispered Adam, clutching Kris tightly to his chest.

“Adam, my love, you’re breaking my heart here. I want to stay, god knows I do.”

“Then stay, angel. You can go to work from here in the morning. I’ll even promise not to pounce on you when you wake up so you can get ready,” Adam said with a little smile. “Please, I don’t want to be alone tonight.”

It had been a spectacular day. Kris had indeed been pounced on the moment that he’d opened his eyes. After fucking him senseless, Adam made omelets for them and then insisted on watching the news channel for an hour. With no plans and no work for Adam anymore, they spent the day doing whatever they wanted, which ended up to be a make out session in the shower, grocery shopping and messing around in the studio. Kris was so appreciative of the dinner Adam cooked that he offered to give him another rimjob, which he had accepted with great enthusiasm. At seven, Kris started hinting that he had to go home. An hour and a half later he’d walked around the apartment gathering up his things, but Adam kept putting them back and whining exactly like a ‘puppy.’

Shit…this is so hard. I need to go home, but what if he gets so upset that he has another episode and I’m not here? Kris suddenly remembered what Sheila said about taking care of himself. She forgot to mention that it would feel like my heart was being ripped from my body. “But I don’t have my work clothes with me. Please, try to understand? I love you so much, but I really need to go home.”

Adam sighed in what sounded like resignation.

“How about this? You call me when you’re in bed and we can have phone sex and talk until you fall asleep,” Kris suggested.
“Okay,” Adam said, pouting. “But when do I get to see you again?”

*Oh, god, that bottom lip is so tempting.* “Well I have class tomorrow night, so how about after work on Tuesday?” Unable to bear Adam’s pout any longer, Kris lifted up to his toes and sucked on his favorite freckle.

Adam moaned and kissed him, then started to walk them back to his bedroom.

*Damn, I should have resisted!* He tried to pull back but Adam wasn’t having it, and there was nothing he could do since Adam had those made-to-manhandle-Kris arms. “Baby,” he said in a muffled voice against Adam’s mouth.

Adam broke the kiss and a predatory look replaced his puppy eyes in an instant. “Nope, sorry gorgeous, but you don’t get a choice after that.” He kept moving them, his hands on Kris’ ass, out of the living room and down the hallway.

“That’s not fair, I defy anyone to resist such a cute freckle!” Now Kris was the one whining.

When they reached the bedroom, Adam pushed him down onto the bed and straddled him. “Are you going to behave, my little rabbit, or do I need to get out my whip again?”

Kris gasped, wide-eyed, and tried to figure out if he should give in or fight. *Ooohh, but the whip… the whip!* Of course, if he’d insisted on it, Kris knew that Adam would let him leave, but…*who am I kidding? I’ll go home afterwards.* “I won’t behave,” he said and tried to wriggle out from under Adam, praying that he had been serious about his threat.

“Oh? Well now, I think you’ll have to pay the price for that.” Adam unbuckled his belt, pulled it off and wound it tightly around Kris’ wrists. That did it; there was no way that Kris was going anywhere now. *Yessssss!* Little did Adam know that on their very first night together, he had fulfilled one of Kris’ most cherished fantasies by tying him up to the window in the club room. He fidgeted some more until Adam slammed his hips down into Kris.

“You are going to lie on this bed and not move until I say so, my kinky rabbit, isn’t that right?”

“Yes…yes, anything,” Kris said, nodding frantically. His dick was already hard and painful beneath his jeans.

Adam got up and opened his closet. While he wasn’t looking, Kris moved his wrists slightly, loving the feel of the leather binding them.

“You better not be moving over there or I won’t try out any of my wonderful toys on you!” Adam called from the depths of the walk-in closet.

*Toys?* Kris couldn’t help but squeal in delight, imagining what Adam would bring out. He heard a deep chuckle.

“Excited, are you? Hmmmm, oh yes, that will do nicely,” said Adam wickedly. He emerged from the closet carrying the whip, a dildo, a pocketknife, a pair of handcuffs, a blindfold and a cock ring.

Kris’ brain went into overdrive and he started to pant in anticipation.

“Now let’s just see if I can discover some more of Kris Allen’s kinks, shall I?”

*Ohmygodohmygod.* He wasn’t sure about the dildo, but everything else made him wild with desire. Feeling more daring than usual, he stared at Adam and licked the belt that was restraining his hands.
Adam’s eyes flew open, but then he squeezed them shut and let out a soft moan. He shivered and pinned Kris with a heated gaze. “You are a bad…wicked…rabbit,” he said gruffly, stalking to the bed.

“Yes, I’m a bad rabbit, punish me…punish me,” said Kris huskily. *He looks like a ravenous wolf!*

Adam reached the side of the bed and suddenly dropped down to his knees and disappeared. *What the…?* Kris heard some rustling beneath the bed and a ‘click,’ and then Adam rose from the floor holding his half of the tie. At the sight of it, Kris groaned and tried to rub his crotch with his bound hands. His own part of the tie was a souvenir of their first night and therefore a love object, but it had also become a kink object and a symbol of his secret bondage fetish. *Not so secret anymore.* There was something even hotter about Adam using his half to bind Kris.

“Oh no you don’t,” Adam growled, yanking Kris’ hands away. He considered Kris, the toys and the bed and tossed aside the handcuffs. Kris frowned, watching them bounce once on the floor. *No handcuffs?* But his disappointment would be short-lived. Adam hauled him up the bed and unfastened the belt, instead strapping each wrist separately to the base of the headboard at opposite corners, one with the belt and the other with the tie. Kris liked this new position immediately, but was upset that he was still clothed and wondered how Adam would take care of his shirt now that he was all tied up. He eyed the pocketknife and licked his lips, then began to squirm as his briefs got wetter and wetter.

“Now, now,” Adam chided, “I can’t have you moving around like that.” He re-entered the closet and came out with two scarves, stripped off Kris’ pants and tied each ankle to the frame at the end of the bed, leaving him completely trussed up in nothing but a green t-shirt and black, sopping underwear.

“Please,” Kris moaned and shuddered, unable to stop himself from bucking into the air.

“Mmmm…I think I like having you at my mercy, my sexy, tied up rabbit.” Adam sat on the bed and ran one finger down Kris’ cotton covered dick. Kris whimpered and bucked again. “But I’ll have to do something about these,” Adam said, hooking one finger under the band of Kris’ briefs, “and your shirt, of course.”

Kris glanced at the knife again and felt his heart start to race. “I d-don’t care about the shirt,” he stuttered. Many years ago one of his boyfriends had been into knifeplay, but only for about a week, and Kris hadn’t had to courage to ask for it after that despite how much it turned him on.

“No? Hmm, you seem awfully interested in this,” Adam said picking up the pocketknife and bouncing it in his hand.

Kris followed the knife’s movement and watched as Adam slowly opened the blade. He moaned and writhed as much his bonds would allow.

“Why Kristopher, who would have imagined?” Adam teased. He trailed the flat of the blade from the collar of Kris’ shirt to the hem.

*I’m dreaming. There is no way that my fantasies are actually coming to life.*

“Hold still, lover,” Adam said softly, suddenly gentle and cautious. He lifted the hem of Kris’ shirt and cut it with the knife. Kris held his breath and watched the gleaming metal coming towards him as it sliced open the cotton. When his chest was finally bared, Adam drew the blade edge lightly around Kris’ nipples and down to his navel before sitting back and closing the knife.

Kris thrashed on the bed, frenzied with want and more turned on than he could ever remember being.
“Touch me…please, Adam…touch me!” But Adam just looked at him lovingly. What happened to the wolf? Why is he being so gentle now?

“Kris, angel, you really trust me, don’t you?”

Where is this coming from? “Of course I trust you,” Kris said without hesitation, trying to manage the fiery need pumping through him. But it was too much. “Please, I’m begging you,” he groaned, twisting and jerking as the restraints dug into his skin.

Adam smiled genuinely and then the predator returned in full force. “Touch you? How about…” He leaned over Kris’ cock and opened his mouth an inch away from it, looked up with a wicked gleam in his eye and flicked his tongue.

“Fuck! You are evil…you’re a…a wolf!” cried Kris.

Adam chuckled darkly. “Yes I am…a big, bad wolf that’s about to enjoy a tender, delicious rabbit. He ran his tongue seductively across his upper lip, bent down and bit Kris right on his inner thigh.

Kris threw his head back in ecstasy and groaned loudly. “Again…again…” he pleaded.

“So it’s not just the neck then,” Adam mused. The wolf became merciless, biting all over Kris’ body and gauging his reaction to certain spots. Kris cried and begged the loudest when Adam tried his thighs, pectorals and neck. Over and over Adam sank his teeth into Kris’ flesh, occasionally drawing blood and sending Kris into fits of babbling. All the other toys lay forgotten as Adam experimented until Kris was beyond yelling or pleading and just lay there, quaking and whispering a constant stream of “pleasepleaseplease.”

At long last Adam sat back and surveyed Kris’ utterly claimed body with a satisfied smirk. “So fucking tasty, but this wolf is still hungry. He picked up the pocketknife again and, keeping it closed, moved the handle up and down the soaking wet cotton hiding Kris’ cock.

“M-more…p-please,” Kris sobbed, desperate for the stimulation.

“Oh I’ll give you more,” Adam said with an evil grin. He unfolded the knife for the second time that night and quickly cut through the fabric on both sides of Kris’ briefs.

Kris felt such relief when his dick was finally free that he almost came right then. Before he had time to absorb the sheer sexiness of having his underwear cut from his body, Adam bit him on the groin right next to his slick length. “Fuck! God fucking damnit!”

“Such language!” Adam said in mock surprise. “I think I might like to hear more of that,” he continued and chomped down everywhere but the one place Kris was frantic to feel Adam’s mouth. Kris yelled every curse word he knew until Adam relented. “Let me hear you ask for it, rabbit…go on, I know you want to.

Oh my god I can’t ask him for that! He’s still getting used to it…I can’t! “Touch me!” he cried.

“You’ll have to be more specific than that. Touch you with what…my hands, my mouth? Hmmm?”

“Anything, anything…please!”

Adam shook his head. “I know what you want, and I will give it to you. Ask me.”

“Your mouth…please,” croaked Kris, tears leaking from his eyes.
“What about my mouth?”

Kris whipped his head from side to side, finally at his limit. “I want your mouth on my cock! Suck me! Suck my dick until I come!”

And with that, Adam took Kris’ throbbing, aching cock in his hand and lowered his mouth down around it. Kris sucked in his breath and let it out with a long, loud wail. *Don’t move…don’t move…* He was shaking with the effort it took to remain absolutely still so he wouldn’t buck into Adam’s mouth. His voice was his only option to express the combination of relief, pleasure and need ripping him apart as Adam lapped at his dick, sucked him hard and swallowed him down, thought not all the way. “Fuck yes! Oh my fucking god suck it, suck it!”

And Adam did. Up and down, over and over he caressed Kris’ length with his mouth, hallowed his cheeks and sucked cock like a ravenous beast.

“Oh…fuck…YES!” Adam pulled off just in time as jets of hot cum pumped from Kris’ dick and pooled on his stomach. “God…oh my god, Adam…shit…fuck…” Kris swore as his body went slack in the restraints.

Adam looked extremely pleased with himself. “You are developing quite the potty mouth, angel.” He stood up, yanked his pants down and pulled out his stiff cock, then jerked it three times, shuddered and aimed so that his seed mixed with Kris’.

“Oh!” Kris cried as he felt Adam’s cum hit his belly. *So hot, so fucking hot.* Adam sat back down on the bed, swiped his pinky through their combined semen and tasted it. Kris trembled and licked his lips. “Ohhh…you’re killing me here,” he moaned, watching Adam suck on his finger.

“Mmmm…salty, kind of creamy…want some?” Adam asked, loading up another finger and offering it to Kris.

Kris opened his mouth in response. *Blazing, scorching hot. I am the luckiest bastard on the planet.* Adam lay down, raised his finger to Kris’ mouth and smeared the cum on his lips. Kris moaned, absorbing the complete eroticism of that act. He licked his lips, once, twice and then Adam kissed him. They swirled their cum and spit back and forth between them until Kris started to pull on his bonds, now wishing he were free so he could embrace Adam. “Want to hold you,” he said.

Adam sat up and released him so they could snuggle. “Are your wrists okay, angel?” He traced the red lines and kissed them tenderly.

Kris nodded and wiggled closer. “I love every mark you give me. I belong to you.”

“I belong to you, too.” Adam kissed Kris’ ear and squeezed him. “Next time we’ll try the blindfold.”

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*What is that sound? So annoying.* Kris sighed back into Adam’s arms and tried to remember the dream he was having. *Something about a wolf. Crap, there it is again…oh!/His eyes popped open as his tired brain recognized his ringtone at last. Who on earth is calling at this time of…wait what time is it?* He raised his head and squinted at the clock on the bedside table. *Shit!/Trying not to disturb Adam too much, he got out of bed and hastily made his way to the living room. He bent over, wincing a little from some of the bruises on his thighs, and dug into the front pocket of his bag until*
he found his phone.

“Hello? Yes, Matt, I know…I’m sorry, I just…yes…I’ll be in as soon as I can. Everything is fine, I just overslept…okay…shit, I’m sorry…yeah, bye.”

“Angel?” Adam called from the bedroom.

Kris grabbed his bag and hurried back. “I’m here, but I have to run. I’m really late for work. Damn it, I should have gone home last night.” He rummaged until he found some clothes and pulled them on quickly. “Got to get home, shower…ugh, no time for breakfast.” He turned to the bed to kiss Adam goodbye. “I’ll call you after work, okay, before my class tonight…baby?” Adam was sitting up in the bed but he looked sad. “What’s the matter?”

“I made you stay last night. I didn’t even set the alarm or anything,” he said quietly.

“Adam, you didn’t make me do anything. I wanted to stay. Okay, so I was planning to go home afterwards, but we fell asleep and that’s not your fault.”

“You’re annoyed.”

“Because I’m late! Look, I don’t have time to talk about this right now. I’ve got to go.” He kissed Adam quickly on the lips and zipped up his bag. “I love you. I’ll call you later…okay?”

Adam nodded and laid back down, still looking unhappy.

Damn, I wish I had more time! I don’t like leaving him like this…four days ago he finally lets me into his apartment and now I have to run out of it. Shit!

He paused, undecided for a moment and then went back to the bed. Adam was curled up on his side facing away from Kris. “Hey,” he said softly, sitting down and stroking Adam’s shoulder, “I’m really sorry that I have to run out on you like this.”

“It’s fine,” said Adam tonelessly without moving, “go to work. I don’t want you get in more trouble because of me.”

“I’m not going to get in trouble. Someone else is covering for me but I need to go relieve them.”

Adam said nothing. “Baby…I…”

“Just go!” Adam snapped.

What the hell? “What’s going on here? Why are you angry at me?”

“I’m not.”

If this were happening a year ago, Kris would have done anything to make Adam happy in that moment, no matter the cost to himself. He ground his teeth in frustration. What am I supposed to do here? “Well you sound angry, and I’d love to stay and work this out with you but I can’t,” he said with a hint of impatience and got up to leave. Just as he reached the doorway, he heard a sniffle and a tiny sob. Crap, I can’t do this. He walked around to other side of the bed so he could see Adam’s face. Oh my god, he’s really crying. But I thought he was angry…for some reason. Ugh, I can’t keep up with his moods. I just want him to be happy.

So much had happened in the past four days that Kris was starting to feel dizzy from it all. Coming to Adam’s apartment in the first place, then Sam’s escape, Adam in the hospital and the flashbacks, Adam quitting his job, and underlying it all was the love, joy, trust and amazing sex. And now this…whatever this is. Kris pinched the bridge of his nose and sat down on the edge of the bed. “Adam, I’m so confused. I don’t know what to do.”
Adam looked up at him with tears in his eyes. “Me neither,” he said in a small, scared voice.

Kris ran his thumb across Adam’s cheek. “Why are you sad?”

“I…I don’t know,” said Adam, snuffling. “Go to work. I’ll be fine anyways I’ve got Sheila today.”

Kris didn’t know what else to do and he had to go. He leaned down and hugged Adam, kissed him on the forehead and whispered, “I love you.”

An hour later he was at his counter dressed in a high turtleneck shirt and khakis; his hair was still damp and his stomach was aching with hunger. “Thanks Trevor, I really appreciate you covering my butt. I owe you one, man.” Thankfully it was slow in the store, so Kris had plenty of time to think as he folded sweaters. But no matter how many times he replayed the morning in his head, he couldn’t figure out Adam’s behavior. The only thing he came up with was that Adam felt guilty. That can’t be all…there’s more going on, I know it. It was killing him to be working when Adam might still be lying in bed crying. He’s got therapy today. You don’t have to fix everything. You can’t anyway. You’re going to have to get used to this.

This was a true test of Kris’ recent pledge not to be a people-pleaser. Supporting Adam through his flashbacks, rage and fear this weekend had been challenging no doubt, but at least it was straightforward. Kris knew what to do in an emergency and he did it out of love and concern for Adam. And he had also been doing better in expressing his desires. But this…this kind of situation where he was somehow involved in an emotional conflict…at least I think I am…it triggered all of the old messages saying that if he didn’t make things better, if he didn’t make Adam happy then he wouldn’t be loved.

Ridiculous. He’s not even mad at me…is he? Do I even have anything to feel guilty about? He reviewed the morning again, trying to remember if he had been too harsh with Adam in any way. The sheer familiarity of this kind of thinking and emotional uncertainty made Kris nauseous. Oh my god, you’re doing it again…just stop it! This is exactly why none of your other relationships worked.

The more he thought about it, the more Kris wondered if he’d be able to handle a long term relationship with someone like Adam. He couldn’t, he wouldn’t allow himself to go back to his doormat ways, pouring his energy into assuring everyone’s happiness but his own as some sort of twisted way to get love. Adam’s emotional ups and downs would only make it that much harder for Kris to ignore his triggers and take care of himself. But I love him. And I’m stronger now. I can do this…I can. I don’t know why Adam was angry or sad, and I can’t assume that I had anything to do with that. He loves me, that much I know. That’s what I’m going to focus on until we can sort this out.

“Dude, I didn’t think you even owned a turtleneck.”

Kris looked up from his pile of sweaters. “Oh, hey Matt. Well, just this one.” He smiled dreamily, thinking about the way Adam had claimed him. Yes, he loves me. And I’m going to use my employee discount to get some more of these shirts today.

“Uh-huh. Yeah, I think the last time I wore one was when I got a hickey in eighth grade,” Matt chuckled knowingly. “Anyway, what the hell happened this morning?” He pulled a granola bar out of his pocket and casually slipped it to Kris while checking to make sure no one was watching. “Pretty sure you haven’t eaten yet.”

“Oh my god, you are a lifesaver!” He grabbed the bar and tore into it. “Just overslept. It’s no big deal,” he said through mouthfuls of granola.
Matt eyed him suspiciously. “I haven’t seen you in forever, man. Is everything, you know, going okay?”

Kris swallowed the last of the bar and tossed the wrapper. “It is actually. I mean, sure, it’s not all roses but that’s what happens in real relationships, right? And you deal with it. You work it out and you try your best because you love the person,” he said without thinking.

“You…you’re in love with this guy, with Adam?”

Kris blushed. “I am. I love him, Matt.” *I love him enough not to try to fix him, enough to take care of myself so I can love him without resentment. God give me strength.*
“Where you mad at him?”

“No.”

“Then why did you snap at him?”

Adam looked away from Sheila’s calm green eyes and stared at the tropical island scene on the wall, remembering how he used to wish he could jump into the painting and escape his painful life. “I was mad at myself I guess.”

“Because?”

“Because…I don’t know.” Adam knew he wouldn’t get away with that; she had never let him when he was younger and she wouldn’t now.

“Of course you know,” she said predictably.

“Fine.” He got up and walked to the painting. *Maybe I need a vacation.* “I don’t like how much I…”*Yeah, a tropical vacation. That would be perfect. Maybe Kris would come with me…*

“Adam.”

*God, was she always this relentless?* He puffed out a breath and turned around. “I don’t like how much I need him. When he was packing up on Sunday night, I felt…I don’t know, like if he left I just wasn’t going to be okay.”

“And what made you think of that this morning?”

Adam shrugged and sat back down, stretching his legs out on the leather stool in front of his chair. “I should have cared more about him being late, but all I could think about was how much I didn’t want him to go. And then I felt bad about that and then I got pissed.”

“So, you got mad at yourself for needing him and then you cried.”

*Shit, I shouldn’t have mentioned that in the first place.* He nodded. “And then he hugged me and left and voila! Here I am,” he said, throwing his arms wide and adopting a fake grin. Sheila quirked a smile and tapped her finger on the arm of her chair. *Ugh.* “Yes I cried.”

“Why, Adam?”

“Because that’s what people do when they’re sad?” he said cheekily.

Sheila just raised an eyebrow. Adam looked at his lap and spoke quietly. “I…I really don’t want to talk about this.”

“I know,” she said kindly. “You know why I’m pushing you on it though, don’t you?”
“Because you’re evil,” he retorted with an impish grin.

The soft lines in her heart-shaped face creased as she chuckled. “Yes, I’m an evil therapist, you’ve finally figured me out. Adam…” She paused, as if considering how much to press him.

His eyes darted to the picture on the wall again. *I can’t escape this if I want to get better, if I want Kris.* “I got scared because I…I don’t want to lose him.” He pushed out a long breath and wrung his hands nervously.

“That was very brave of you to say. It shows me how committed you are to this process,” she smiled encouragingly. Adam tried to take comfort in her words, but he knew the worst was still coming.

“Can you continue or should we stop here and do some relaxation?” she asked.

Adam thought about his dream of Kris the angel flying away from him. *More like a nightmare.* He heard the words in his head again and cringed, already feeling his throat tighten up painfully. Sheila pushed a box of tissues toward him, but he shoved them away roughly and sprang up from his chair, pacing and running his hands through his hair repeatedly.

“Adam, you’re agitated. Maybe we should stop now.”

“No. No, I can do this.” He gritted his teeth and scrubbed the wetness from his eyes. “I had a nightmare that Kris left me because…because I’m a damaged freak,” he said, coming to a stop in the middle of the floor and hanging his head. A few tears dropped to the wood floor.

Sheila was not the type to hug clients, but she got up and put her hand on Adam’s shoulder reassuringly. “And who is telling you that you are a damaged freak?”

“They are,” he whispered. “They always do.”

“No, Adam,” Sheila said with sympathy in her eyes.

“What?” Adam snapped his head up and glared at her angrily. “Yes they are! Those bastards, they called me a freak!”

Sheila shook her head sadly. “Can’t you hear yourself? Yes, they called you a freak, but did they ever call you damaged? And they are all in prison now, they’re not talking to you anymore. Adam, who is telling you that you’re a damaged freak? Think about it.”

He could hear them in his head, his so-called friends from theater, people he’d trusted and cared for. But one voice stood out over them all. “You’re nothing but a fat, disgusting, freak, Lambert!” The ugly words coming out of Sam’s beautiful, twisted mouth were like poisoned darts. Then other voices joined the fray, his parents and Ali, telling him that Sam was wrong, that he wasn’t a freak and then…there it was, Adam’s own voice. *I’m a damaged freak, damaged goods. No one will ever want me now. I’m broken. Look what I’ve become. I’ll always be alone. No one will ever love me. I’m only good for sex.*

Adam sat down hard on the floor and put his head in his hands. “I am. I’m telling myself that stuff,” he mumbled. He’d known this on some level for many years, but it had never been so clear to him before.

“That’s right,” said Sheila softly. She sat down next to him. “And do you believe that Kris really thinks you are a ‘damaged freak’?”

He reached up, plucked a tissue from the box on the table behind him and blew his nose. “No, not really. He keeps telling me how great I am actually.”
“And do you feel great when you’re with him?”

“Most of the time, yes.” *Except for when I’m acting like an idiot.*

“Adam, I want you to listen to me carefully.” She shifted so that they faced each other and looked into his pained face. “When you stop believing that you are damaged and unworthy of love, then you will stop needing Kris with such intensity.”

“But it’s true, Sheila. Look at me. I’m…ashamed of myself. Look at what I let them do to me…what it made me into. I’ll never be…normal.” He couldn’t help the tears that started to flow as he mourned for himself. “I’m broken,” he choked out, “he’ll realize it sooner or later and then he’ll leave and I’ll be alone…again.”

Sheila squeezed his arm. “Come on, let’s go sit down.” When they were settled back in the chairs, she gave Adam a moment to compose himself before continuing. “Let’s review what’s actually real, shall we?”

*Not this again. I know what she’s going to say and it’s not going to help.*

“You didn’t ‘let’ them do anything, Adam. You were raped and beaten by eight other people.”

“I trusted them.”

“Yes, you trusted them. Does everyone you trust hurt you? Did you make them hurt you by trusting them?”

Adam sighed wearily. “No.” They’d been over this countless times when he’d been younger and tried to date after high school.

“Do you trust Kris?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think he’d ever hurt you like that?”

“Of course not!” he said passionately. “Kris loves me. He respects me and trusts me. He’d never hurt me that way! He thinks I’m amazing and funny and smart and sexy and…” *Oh.* Suddenly he understood what she’d been getting at. Adam looked at her, sitting calmly in her chair and waiting for him to realize it on his own. “I don’t know how to stop thinking those bad things about myself.”

“Ahhh. Now we’re getting somewhere.”

By the time his session was over, Adam was emotionally drained. *I can’t believe she gave me homework. What am I, twelve? At least she said I could do it over the phone with him. Seriously embarrassing.* After cooking himself a simple stir-fry for lunch, Adam sat on his couch and looked around his apartment. *What am I going to do now?* It would be hours before Kris called him. *Maybe I should look for a new job. Or work on my album. I could call Ali, or Neil.* He continued to run down his list of options, trying to push away the suffocating need he felt for Kris. His apartment felt empty now. Adam had always relished the quiet of his sanctuary, but all he wanted was to hear Kris laughing, talking…groaning, screaming his name in ecstasy. The image of Kris tied up and spouting filthy words popped into Adam’s mind and he groaned softly.

Amazed that I haven’t developed tennis elbow yet, he thought as he unzipped his pants. The frequency with which Adam masturbated had increased exponentially since he’d met Kris. He stripped off his pants and sat with his legs open, slowly rubbing himself through his underwear and
daydreaming about those brown eyes and...Perfect lips...the way they look around my cock...mmm...and that tongue... Adam shivered and pressed the heel of his palm down firmly, remembering the feel of Kris’ tongue in his hole. Oh yes, stay with that.

He took off his boxer-briefs and stuck a finger in his mouth, sucking on it until it was dripping wet. Pulling up his knees, he positioned himself the way that he had the first time he’d felt Kris’ glorious tongue in him and touched the quivering ring of muscle with his slippery finger. He moaned out loud and pictured Kris between his legs, licking him over and over again. He rubbed circles around his hole and then pushed a fingertip in, thinking of the way he’d fucked himself with Kris’ tongue. “Mmmmm, yeah baby…just like that…” Deeper and deeper went his finger until he found the right angle and brushed his prostate. “Angel…yessssss…oh god…f-feels so good…” He grasped his cock and pumped both hands at the same time, losing himself in the sensations. Suddenly he imagined Kris’ finger in him, thrusting in and out. “Fuck!” he yelled and bit his lip, coming hard all over his hand and stomach.

Well that was unexpected. He flopped onto his side, breathing heavily and wondering if he’d ever go that far with Kris. Or even further, maybe? No, let’s not go there. Just then his phone rang and he thanked the universe for distracting him from that line of thinking. He dug his phone out of his pants pocket with his clean hand and lay back down on the couch. “Hey bro.”

“Aww, how do you always know it’s me?”

“Because your ugly mug shows up on my phone every time you call, dork.”

“Love you, too, blockhead.” Neil had loved Charlie Brown ever since he was five.

“You know that I have to call you Lucy now.”

“Shut up. Why all you all out of breath, or do I not want to know?”

“Mmm, I was just thinking about my hot boyfriend before you called.”

“You’re not supposed to tell me that, I don’t want to know. God, the last thing I need is images of my brother jerking off.”

Adam chuckled and left the couch to clean himself up. “So, to what do I owe the pleasure, Lucy?”

“Oh, mom wanted me to tell you that have to invite Kris to Thanksgiving. Apparently neither of you gets any say in the matter.”

“Of course we don’t. Well, I’ll ask him, but he probably has plans to go home for that.” Hope not, library sex is so hot. They chatted for a bit and Adam told Neil about quitting his job.

“It’s about damn time. Honestly, you can do so much better.”

“Yeah, that’s what Kris said, too.” He rinsed his hand in the bathroom sink and mopped the cum off his belly with a rag.

Neil snorted. “I see how it is now. I’ve been telling you that for months! Jeez.”

“Well you aren’t as cute as he is.”

“Uh-huh. Well I’ve done my duty. If Kris ends up staying the night, please, for the love of god, sleep in one of the guest rooms and not your old one, which I might remind you is right on the other side of my old room, where I will be sleeping.”
“What, you don’t want to hear the sounds of passionate lovemaking coming from my boyhood bedroom?” Adam laughed and Neil groaned like he was in pain. “Oh don’t get your panties in a twist. There’s only a twin bed in there, I’m sure we’ll need more room than that.”

After hanging up with Neil, Adam decided that it was time to check the news again. Ten years ago he’d been obsessed with following the fate of his attackers and after that it had become a habit to keep up with current events. It was just one more thing that helped him feel that he was in control of his life. He threw on a pair of sweats, grabbed a bag of dried cherries to munch on and sat down just in time for the two o’clock news segment.

“Opening this hour of NewsCentral on KCAL 9 is a report that Sam Clarke, who was captured and returned to prison on Saturday, died in the prison hospital this morning.” Adam leapt up from the couch and ran to the TV until he was a foot away from it. “Sam was shot three times in the chest by police who caught him trying to force entry into an apartment building on Friday night. In other news…”

Holy fuck. Holy fucking fuck. Adam didn’t know what to feel. He dropped the bag of cherries and stood motionless in front of the TV as his mind tried to absorb the information. Suddenly he was assaulted by memories of Sam, the sweet, sexy boy he’d had a crush on since freshman year. He remembered the elation he’d felt when Sam had finally come out of the closet and asked him out three years later, his pride at having such a hot boyfriend who was so brave after struggling to come to grips with his sexuality, the thrill of their first kiss in a theater dressing room, his complete joy when Sam said he was ready to have sex and the awkwardness and intensity of their first time together.

And then everything changed. Sam wanted to slow things down and they went back to kissing only. Sam recruited some other guys to join theater and they had all clicked instantly, becoming a tight circle of friends throughout their senior year. Adam was patient with Sam and knew he just needed more time to get comfortable with himself, so he waited and enjoyed the close camaraderie with his new friends. It was a month before graduation when it all happened.

“Faggot! Disgusting, fat, ugly freak!” No...nooooooo! Adam stumbled back from the TV and clamped is hands over his ears, shaking his head vigorously. His legs hit the coffee table and he sat down hard, desperately trying to fend off the memories now. Got to try...what did Shelia say all those years ago...hot? No, that's not it...fuck...cold, cold, yes... “Stupid fucking idiot! How could you think I would love a freak like you?” NO! He ran into the bathroom, jumped into the shower fully clothed and turned on the cold water full blast. “Shit!” he yelled as the icy jets shocked his body into the present. “God dammit! Fuck!” But it was working; the images and sounds faded away and Adam sank to the bottom of the tub, shivering and aching with cold. He turned off the water and sat there for a few more minutes just to make sure they were gone.

Holy shit. I did it! I made them go away all by myself! Getting out was difficult; his clothes were heavy with water and his body was trembling violently. He shed his shirt and sweatpants and climbed out, barely making it to his bed before he passed out from exhaustion and fell asleep still soaking wet.

He woke up just thirty minutes later and pulled the blankets over his naked body, but he couldn’t go back to sleep. I can’t believe it. I actually did it and I don’t even want to fuck someone right now. It had never worked before because he’d always relied on other people in the past to help him through his flashbacks, Ali, his parents, Sheila…and he’d ended up in the hospital more times that he cared to remember. Shelia had been amazed when the flashbacks stopped abruptly after two years of struggling with them. Adam told her that he was finally using his skills, but it was a lie; what he had discovered was that they disappeared with dominating sex.
Wow. Holy fucking wow. Adam got out of bed and stood in front of the dresser mirror. He grinned at himself, feeling a swell of pride rise up at his accomplishment. Giggling, he ran naked out to the living room and snatched up his phone. He shot off two text messages, one to Ali: ‘I rule. tell u about it later,’ and one to Kris: ‘love u bb. sorry 4 this morning. can u come over tonight?’ He paced, put on some clothes and paced some more, waiting. After five minutes his phone buzzed with Kris’ response: ‘yes. call u in an hour. luv u 2.’

“Eeeee!” Adam squealed, jumping up and down. He went into his studio, switched on the mic and the speakers and started singing, “Ohhh he’s comin’ over toniiight, my baby he loves me and he’s so cute and sexaaaaayyyyy…uh yeah I’m so cool and I ruuuuullle that’s right take that, and that and uh uh uhhh you ain’t seen nothin’ yet…” He wiggled his ass and pumped his fist into the air, feeling on top of the world. After a while he settled down and found himself actually working on one of his tracks. He got into it, barely noticing that an hour had flown by and was startled when his phone rang.

“Kris! Angel, you won’t believe what happened today!” he said immediately after answering.

“Wow! You sound so happy! What happened?”

“Well, I heard on the news today that Sam died.”

“Oh my god, are you ok?” Kris asked with concern.

“Yes! I mean, I wasn’t, but I am now. Kris, I did it! I made my flashback go away all by myself!”

“Adam! That’s incredible! I mean, wow, I’m so proud of you!”

“I know right?” He bounced on his toes and grinned dopily. “So you’re really coming over later?”

“You bet. I can’t wait to congratulate you in person.”

Adam caught the hint of seduction in Kris’ tone and shivered. “Mmm, I can’t wait either. Want to feel those gorgeous lips on mine…I can almost taste you now…”

Kris moaned softly. “Oh baby, don’t get me started. I’ve got to go to school and how would I look walking into class with a raging hard on?”

“Oh alright, I’ll take pity on you for now,” Adam chuckled. “Hey, about this morning…”

Kris was silent for a second before responding. “It’s okay. I just didn’t know what was wrong or what I should do.”

“You did the right thing. You had to go to work. I was just feeling, well, a bit overwhelmed. I’m sorry I snapped at you. But I got some things worked out at therapy today.”

“ApoLOGY accepted. I’m so happy for you.”

“Thanks! Oh, um by the way, what are your plans for Thanksgiving?”

“Well I usually go home. Why?”

Adam stuck out his bottom lip and tried not sound pouty. “My mom wanted me to invite you to our house, but you know, it’s fine if you’ve already got plans, I mean I figured you would and all—”

“Adam,” Kris said chuckling, “I am so coming to your house for Thanksgiving.”
“Really?” he squeaked, smiling like a fool.

“Yes, cutie. Besides, I’ll be home for two weeks at Christmas so they can’t complain too much. And,” he said, lowering his voice, “I really miss your library.”

“Ohhh angel, there are so many wonderful places to explore in my house…you have no idea.” Adam licked his lips, imagining fucking Kris in room after room.

“Damn,” said Kris hoarsely, “I better go before I start jerking off in public.”

“That is so fucking sexy. God, hurry up and get here already. I’m so hot for you, baby.”

“Me too, gorgeous. I love you. I’ll be there as soon as class gets out.”

“I love you, too, angel.”

Adam passed the next few hours talking to Ali. They had always been able to chat endlessly on the phone. Adam remembered how his mom used to yell at him to hang up and go to bed almost every night of the week. “Oh my god, Adam, you SO totally rule!” she said after hearing about his success.

“I love you, Ali. All these years, you’ve been the best friend I could ever want. I just want you to know how much that means to me.”

“Aww, I love you, too, puppy. Don’t make me cry, my mascara will run and I have a hot date tonight.”

“A hot date? Oooh, who is it?”

“You know that sexy DJ over at Rage?”

“Holy shit, Ali, nice catch! He is smokin’!”

At nine-thirty, Adam sat down on his couch to watch TV so he wouldn’t start pacing again. I just know he’s looking for parking. I wonder if I can get him a parking pass to the garage? Ugh, I don’t even work at the club anymore…maybe I should move…Oh my god! He’s here! He jumped up and combed a hand through his hair, then went to the door and peeked through the peephole. Look at him, so gorgeous. My boyfriend, my lover. Adam’s heart ached with love and he was suddenly filled with desire for the man on the other side of the door.

“Sorry,” Kris said when Adam opened the door, “parking is a--”

Adam yanked him inside, shut and locked the door, and immediately crushed him to the wall, kissing him feverishly and touching, groping him everywhere.

“Mmph!” Kris threw his arms around Adam started grinding into his thigh.

“Missed you…so bad…angel,” Adam said through his frenzied kisses.

“Me, too,” Kris panted, sliding his arms down to squeeze Adam’s ass and rubbing up against him repeatedly.

They scrabbled at each other’s clothes, trying to keep their mouths together as they undressed. “Turtleneck!” So fucking hard to get off! He heard a seam or two tear before it was finally off and cast aside. “Sorry about…” Adam made sure to grab a condom before tossing his pants.
“Don’t care…”

Adam pulled back and stared at Kris with lusty eyes, his chest rising and falling rapidly. “So fucking hot…so sexy, I’m gonna fuck you right into this wall, rabbit.”

“Do it…do it, you beast…you sexy wolf…fuck me,” Kris growled.

_I love it when he talks dirty._ Adam grunted and bit him hard on the shoulder.

“Oh god…Adam, get inside me…now,” Kris pleaded, throwing his head back to expose his throat.

“Damn right I will,” Adam said, licking his bruised neck and rolling on the condom quickly. He lifted Kris right off the floor, hands under his smooth, perfect ass and slammed him up against the wall.

Kris wrapped his legs around him, pulling him even closer and whispered into his ear, “Give it to me.”

Adam kissed him dirty, sloppily licking his open mouth until he began to whine from the back of his throat. He stopped, spread Kris apart and thrust his dick through the tight muscle, knees buckling slightly at the feel of the pressure squeezing his long, thick, pulsing cock all the way down to its base. “Ohhh g--” It was so good that he just stayed there for a moment.

“Baby…move…please!” Kris begged through clenched jaws.

“Move? How about this?” he snarled, driving up fiercely and making Kris cry out. “And this? And this? Uh! Take it, take it!” Adam feasted on Kris’ flesh as he pounded into him again and again, gnawing on his shoulders and neck and pressing his fingers into the bruises on Kris’ thighs. Up and down, over and over he impaled Kris, cursing and moaning at the delicious pleasure building with every stroke.

“Adam! Yes…more more more,” Kris moaned and tightened his sphincter, bearing down.

“Fuck! Again…again!” Adam yelled.

“You like that, you sexy beast?” Kris panted and teased. He did it again.

“Goddamnit!” Adam couldn’t take it anymore. He pulled them away from the wall and dropped down to the ground, pinning Kris and ramming into him wildly.

Kris squeezed Adam’s cock with his muscles as hard as he could and started pumping his dick furiously, moaning and calling out Adam’s name.

Adam sped up to a feverish pace. The pleasure was so intense, building, building… faster… harder… “Oh…yes! Yes!” He bent Kris in half and slammed into him one last time before he came undone, managing to hold himself up the few seconds it took for Kris to fall apart. Adam ducked down and caught a tongueful of his cum as it spurted out and then collapsed to kiss him messily. They sucked on each other’s lips, swallowed and licked until it was all gone.

“Love you love you love you.” Adam whispered, wrapping his limbs tightly around Kris and rolling them to their side. He gazed into the shining eyes of his lover and felt totally blissed out.

Chapter 25
“How about super talented?”

“It has to be more specific than that.”

“Well,” said Kris, “you’re good at lots of things…”

“Just pick one,” Adam said with a flat voice.

“Okay then, singing. You have an incredible voice. Your turn.”

“I guess I can cook pretty well.”

“You’re an amazing cook! I can’t remember when I’ve eaten better. Alright, I’ve got one. You know how to dress. You always look hot.” Kris heard the scratching of a pen. He lay back on his bed and shifted his phone to his other ear, waiting for Adam to take his turn. “Adam?”

“God, I hate this,” he said sulkily. “List ten wonderful things about Adam Lambert’ …honestly.”

“Do you want to do it some other time?” I wish this weren’t so hard for him. I wish he could really understand how amazing he is.

Kris was more than happy to help him with his therapy homework; he only hoped that Adam would be able to do it by himself someday.

“No. I was supposed to have it ready for Monday and she’ll kill me if it’s not done by our next session.”

“I doubt that.”

Adam sighed. “Okay I have one. I’m a decent brother.”

“I’m sure you’re more than decent. My turn. You have a very talented mouth…the way you make me babble incoherently when you bite me and--”

“I can’t put that on here!” Adam giggled, “Sheila is going to read this, you know.”

Kris chuckled, happy to have made him laugh when he’d obviously been feeling uncomfortable. “Aww, come on, don’t you want her to know how much I love your exceptional tongue? How I go crazy when you lick me right on my--”

“Kris Allen!” Adam laughed loudly, “you bad rabbit…how am I ever going to finish this when all I want to do now is jerk off to your sexy voice?”

“Well now you have something to look forward to when we’re done,” he said cheerfully.

“Promise?”

“You better believe it. And this time I’m going to come thinking of your cock in my mouth.”

“You little tease!” Adam groaned. “Okay, fuck, let’s get this over with. Go, go!”

Ha. He just needed a little more motivation! “You’re charming. I remember when we met at that Starbucks and you charmed the pants off of Katy. She still talks about you when I see her there.”
“Yeah, I have been known for my ways with women. Before I came out, girls used to want to date me all the time even though I wasn’t that good looking.”

“Oh I can’t imagine a time when you weren’t devastating, baby.”

“Trust me, I wasn’t. But let’s move on,” he said quickly. “Okay, how about…well I’m good with kids.”

“Are you really?”

“Yep, my little cousins all think I’m the coolest!”

“That’s awesome! I bet you’d be a great dad someday,” Kris said without thinking. *Oh shit, that’s going to be awkward.* “Um, I mean, if you ever, that is…”

“I used to dream about having kids,” Adam said quietly. “I just never thought it would happen, especially not after…” He cleared his throat. “Anyway, it’s your turn.”

*Damn, way to put your foot in your mouth.*

“I am, that’s really true,” Adam said, sounding a little brighter. “Ummm, let’s see, my mom always tells me that I have pretty eyes.”

“Gorgeous eyes,” sighed Kris, thinking about the way he got lost in them so easily.

“Okay, how many is that? Eight! Thank god, we’re almost done.”

Kris knew exactly what he wanted to say for his last contribution. “You’re brave.”

Adam huffed.

“It’s true,” said Kris. He heard the pen scribbling again.

“Fine, I wrote it down. Last one, finally. Oh, I’ve got it! I have really great taste in men. She will obviously agree since she’s met you.”

Technically it was more of a compliment to Kris. “Then it goes without saying that I have great taste, too. You should just write, Adam Lambert is a hot, sexy wolf.”

“Ha! I will, too. Let’s just see what she has to say about that!” Adam said, laughing. “Okay, can we please get to the sex now that I did my homework like a good boy? Pleeeassee?” he whined.

“You have certainly earned it,” Kris responded. “Let me just give Matt the heads up.” As a courtesy to his housemate, Kris always gave him the chance to protect his ears from Kris’ loud moaning and cursing. Tonight Matt opted for headphones.

After Kris had been late to work that time a week and a half ago, they had agreed to try out a sort of schedule. When Kris had school on Monday and Wednesday nights, he and Adam would just talk on the phone when he got home. Tuesdays and Thursdays, Kris would visit Adam after work for a few hours and they’d spend most of Friday and all Saturday together. Kris had insisted that he would go home on Sunday mornings because he needed a day to himself to work on his music, do homework, hang out with Matt or just relax. It had been difficult to ask for this, knowing that Adam wouldn’t like it, but he had do it no matter how scary it felt.

However, he’d been pleasantly surprised and relieved to discover that Adam had been completely
fine with the idea. So far it had been working out, although Kris thought that he might need to cut out the Tuesday night visits since his boss had complained last Wednesday and today that he wasn’t focused enough and looked tired.

All in all, they ended up having phone sex about three times a week, and Kris was starting to become a little more directive, which he enjoyed immensely. Not only was it mind blowing hot to make Adam come undone over the phone, but he also felt that it was another sign of how much Adam trusted him.

He returned to his room and shut the door. “Let’s go hands free, baby.” Kris had recently invested in a blue tooth earpiece and it made phone sex a whole lot easier and more enjoyable.

“You got it. I’m ready, angel, you have no idea how ready.”

“About as ready as I am to suck you down, gorgeous.”

Adam groaned in response and Kris heard the sound of him shifting on the bed.

“You’re already out of your pants, aren’t you?” Kris asked suspiciously.

“Couldn’t help it, lover, I’m so turned on.”

“Hmmm, you’ll have to pay the price for that. No touching until I say so.”

“Fuck, I love it when you get like this,” Adam said hoarsely, “tell me what else to do, angel.”

“Take off your shirt. Underwear stays on.” Kris was getting excited; Adam had never directly asked to be commanded and it was hot. He knew he’d have to be careful, though, not to get too demanding or it might be triggering. It was also extremely moving to know Adam trusted his judgment that much. Kris stripped down completely and stretched out on his bed. “Now I want you to sit on the side of your bed and lay back, but keep your feet on the ground.”

“Okay.”

“Close your eyes. You’re alone in your room, just relaxing, and then I walk in and see you lying there…beautiful, sexy. I’m walking over to you now, standing at the edge of your bed and looking down at you. Can you see me?”

“Yes,” Adam whispered.

“I’m running my hands down your naked chest, down your torso…” He heard Adam moan quietly. “I’ve got my hands all over you, touching your thighs, your hips…wiggle those hips for me, baby, right to the edge of the bed and spread those gorgeous legs of yours nice and wide.”

Adam was panting softly.

“I’m kneeling down between your thighs now and licking my lips at the sight of your hard cock just waiting for my mouth.”

“Baby…please let me touch…”

“No,” Kris said gently, “I’m doing the touching now. My hand is creeping up your thigh, then your hip, now it’s rubbing circles over your hot dick, over and over…”

“Ohhhh, angel,” Adam moaned.
“I’ve got my fingers under the band of your underwear and I’m pulling them off. Take them off, Adam.”

“Yesss,” he hissed.

“Now hands behind your head.”

“Angel…angel…angel,” Adam repeated, whining.

“Do it,” Kris said firmly, “put your hands behind your head.”

“Okay.”

Kris could tell that Adam was gritting his teeth. _Just a little bit longer. God, this is so hot._ He was having a hard time not touching himself, too. “Look at you, all laid out for me. I’m going to take that beautiful cock of yours right into my mouth. I’ve got my lips inches away from it now.”

Adam whimpered.

“Feel my warm breath, my tongue licking your hot skin…”

“Oh god…please, please…” Adam begged.

“Soon. I’m opening my mouth wide now, feel it close down around your cock, all the way down… feel the tip hit the back of my throat.”

“Please!”

“Yes. But don’t come until I say.”

“Uhhhh, god….s-so good,” Adam stuttered and moaned with relief.

“I’m swallowing you down…feel my lips wrapping around you, my throat squeeze your dick, up and down…up and down…” Kris grasped his length and began to stroke himself. Sweat broke out on his temple and he tried to keep it together, to make it last. He licked his lips and swallowed dryly. “You’re fucking my mouth…thrusting your long, hard cock up into my throat over and over again…”

“Yes…shit….please, let me come!”

“Almost,” Kris croaked, panting now. “I’m sucking your dick…hard…harder…you’re so close…”

“Oh god…please, baby!”

“Come.”

“Oh…OH…Yesssss!”

“I’m…drinking you all up…” Kris squeezed his eyes shut and shuddered as he came quietly. “Every last…drop…so sweet,” he moaned, breathing heavily.

“Oh angel, my angel…so sexy…god…”

“That was…so hot,” Kris breathed, still trembling slightly from the effort it had taken not to cry out.

“Damn,” said Adam, “you need to direct things more often. That was fucking fantastic!”
Kris grinned, please with himself. *I like taking charge. I wonder how far we’ll get with that, though.* He yawned and stretched. “Mmmm, wish we could snuggle now.”

“Me too. You’re coming over tomorrow after work, right?”

“Yeah. Can’t wait. So I was thinking about Thanksgiving next week. Should I like, bring something? I mean, I can’t really cook, but I could buy something.”

“Aww, that’s sweet, but you don’t have to do anything.”

“I just want to help out. Is your whole family coming?”

“Well, a lot of them. Not as many as Halloween, but it will be a decent show, I’m sure. You can help by letting me give you a tour of my house,” Adam said mischievously.

“Sounds like an adventure.”

“Oh it will be. Kris?”

“Yeah, baby.”

“Are you really going home for two weeks next month?” He sounded a little sad.

*Ugh, this is going to get sticky.* “Well, my parents are expecting me to. I always celebrate Christmas with them. Um, doesn’t your family have plans?”

“Nope. We’re Jewish.”

“You’re kidding! Wow, how did I not know that about you?”

“I guess it never came up. Plus, I’m not really that religious. It’s mostly about the traditions so we’ll be doing something in early December this year.”

“Oh.” There was an awkward pause. Kris had the distinct feeling that Adam wanted to get invited to Arkansas for Christmas break.

“How am I going to survive without you for two whole weeks? My right hand will probably fall right off,” he said, trying to sound light-hearted, but Kris knew better.

“You know I would love nothing more than to have you come home with me, but--”

“Really?” Adam said excitedly.

“How am I going to explain this? ‘My family is…well, kind of strange.’ That was putting it lightly. Although Kris’ parents and brother were openly supportive of Kris being gay, the rest of his relatives barely tolerated it. Sure, they all got along well, as long as Kris pretended to be straight when he was around them. Bringing a boyfriend to the family Christmas celebration would cause a riot.

“Strange? What do you mean?”

“Yes, well, they’re not really big on homosexual couples,” Kris said, cringing.

“Are you kidding me?” Adam said, suddenly sounding outraged. “Your parents don’t--”

“No no, my parents are fine, totally fine and so is my brother. In fact, they’d probably love you to
pieces. But everyone else, not so much.” He sighed heavily. “I essentially pretend to be straight
during family get-togethers.” God, I feel like such an idiot. Here he is, being so brave about his
trauma, and I’m this big wimp over something way less difficult. He’d always been ashamed for not
standing up to his relatives, but his people pleasing ways were a barrier; he couldn’t handle the
conflict. “Adam?

Silence.

“I know…it’s awful. I’m so sorry. Please don’t be upset. Adam?”

“Kris. I’m just stunned here. How could you let them treat you that way?”

“I don’t know. It’s always been like that. Remember how I told you that I never used to be
assertive?”

“Listen, this is totally not okay, not at all. You’re my rabbit, but no one else’s, you got that?”

“Adam, you don’t understand. I…” Shit. Just be honest with him. He’s been so open with you.

“Can I tell you something about me?”

“Please do.” Kris would have bet a million dollars that Adam was crossing his arms at this very
moment. He got up and wiped his hands on a towel, then threw on his pajama bottoms and flopped
back down on the bed. “When I was little, somehow I got this crazy idea in my head that if I was
perfect, if I did what everyone wanted and never got mad, then people would love me.”

“Angel, oh my god. How could you think that? You have every right to be angry about things, to do
what you want no matter what the fuck other people think.” Adam sounded indignant on his behalf
and Kris loved him for it.

“I know, I know…but I never really understood that until I met you. Adam, do you have any idea
how many times I’ve had my heart broken because of this problem?”

“How many?”

“At least ten.”

Adam gasped. “Ten? Why? Who in their right mind would do that to you?”

“It wasn’t their fault. They didn’t really know me. Hell, I didn’t even know me. They all got tired of
being with someone who resembled more of a doormat and less of a partner. Adam, don’t you
understand how important you are to me? Because of you, I’m learning that I don’t want to be that
person anymore.”

“Wow. Kris, I don’t know what to say. No wait, actually I do. You’ve helped me so much…let me
help you with this Christmas thing.”

Kris shook his head sadly. “You’re so lucky. There are so many people in your life who love you so
much, no matter what. I…wish I had that.” He curled on his side, suddenly feeling small and
insecure.

“Oh baby, I wish I was there right now to hold you,” Adam said soothingly. “Your relatives don’t
deserve you. You’ve got to show them what a kick ass guy you are! Come on, let me come home
with you and we’ll shake them up good, and I’m not just saying that to be selfish because I’ll miss
you.”
He’s right, you know he is. But it’s so scary! What will they say? Will my parents be mad at me for rocking the boat? Will my relatives ever speak to me again? Deep down inside he felt that he would deserve it if they never did. No, that’s not right! Fuck! “I don’t know…I mean, that sounds incredible. I want to do it, I do…it’s just…I’m scared,” he whispered. “I want them to love me.” He felt his throat tighten and let out a little sob.

“Kris, I’m coming over.”


“Yes, right now.”

“Okay,” he said, sniffing. He couldn’t deny that he really needed the comfort at the moment. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, angel. I’ll be there soon.”

Kris hung up and lay there crying, wishing he had a family like Adam’s. He remembered how they had kissed openly in front of everyone at Halloween, how they had all been so supportive. Why can’t my family be like that? He hugged his knees and rocked himself, weeping bitterly. It felt like hours had passed instead of minutes when he finally heard the doorbell. He dragged himself up and walked out of his room just as Matt was leaving his.

“Kris! Man, are you okay?” he asked, staring at Kris’ tear-streaked face.

He nodded. “That’s Adam at the door. He’s coming to help me out. I’ll be all right, Matt. Thanks.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Don’t worry, really.” He kept walking until he reached the door and opened it to find a very concerned looking Adam standing there.

“Oh angel,” he whispered, and grabbed Kris up in a tight embrace. “Come on, baby.”

Adam led him back to his room and lay down with him. As soon as he had wrapped his limbs around Kris in the small bed, Kris let loose a fresh wave of tears. “Why don’t they love me?” he sobbed.

“Shhhh, it’s okay,” Adam said, kissing the top of Kris’ head and squeezing him. “I’m sure they love you.”

“N-no, they d-don’t.”

“Baby, my sweet Kris, they just don’t understand. Shhhhh, it’s going to be all right.” He rocked Kris gently and stroked his head. “We just need to show them how awesome you are.”

“They’ll hate m-me.”

“Hey now…hey. Listen to me. Your parents love you. That’s the most important thing. If your relatives are going to be idiots, then it’s their loss, but don’t let them have the satisfaction of pushing you down. It doesn’t matter if I come with you or stay here, but you can’t let them make you someone you’re not.”

Kris sniffed and hiccupped a few times. “You’re right, I know you are. I…I don’t want to be that guy anymore. But, I don’t think I’ll be able to do it without you. Will you come home with me?”
“You better believe it, baby. They’re not going to know what hit them,” he said with a chuckle and kissed Kris on the temple.

Kris giggled a little. “Okay, but you can’t leave my side, and we’ll have to sleep in my old room… the bed is probably smaller than this one.”

“It’s going to be amazing. We’ll work it out. Besides, I like being cuddled up this close to you.”

Kris turned over to face Adam. “Thank you,” he said, gazing with watery eyes at his love. He’s incredible. I’m so lucky. He felt the tiniest bit of rebelliousness creep up inside him at the thought of shocking his stuffy, disapproving relatives.

Adam lifted Kris’ chin and looked deep into his eyes. “I love you, angel.”

He’s incredible. I’m so lucky.

Kris stared back, his heart overflowing with emotion. “Adam,” he said softly, “make love to me.”

Adam smiled and put his hand at the back of Kris’ neck, then kissed him tenderly, slowly, sweeping his tongue in and out of Kris’ mouth and nibbling lightly on his lips. He trailed his fingers softly up and down his naked back and gently pushed down his pajama pants to caress his soft curving backside. Kris shivered and surrendered completely, wanting to be taken care of. Adam left his mouth and kissed all the marks on his neck, shoulders and chest, lightly tonguing them while he continued to work Kris’ pants off. When Kris was completely bare, Adam wrapped his long fingers around Kris’ semi-hard length and began to stroke him slowly while nuzzling his neck.

Kris moaned and Adam kissed him again with more passion this time, rolling him all the way onto his back and continuing to work his flesh until it was hard.

“Condoms…in that drawer,” Kris said, pointing to his bedside table.

Adam chuckled softly. “Thank god. The one time I’m not prepared…I just wanted to get here fast,” he said and ran his hand down Kris’ cheek. He kissed the tip of his nose and got up.

Kris watched him undress and felt that whatever he and Adam had to go through to be together, it was worth it. I don’t ever want to lose him. He knew their relationship was still young, but he meant it. Adam lay down and went back to kissing Kris for a minute, then pulled back and hovered over him, resting on one elbow.

“I’m going to take care of you.” He sucked on Kris’ earlobe and gradually made his way down, mouthing and licking his soft skin until he reached the hard flesh and took it into his mouth.

“Feels so good,” Kris groaned. He’s getting really good at that. He looked down and saw Adam smile with his mouth full. Adam hummed and began to massage Kris’ thighs as he sucked and licked. “Mmmm…baby, yesssss.” The little pricks of pain from Adam’s thumbs on his bruises swirled and mixed with the pleasure building in his groin. “More,” he said, starting to breathe rapidly. Adam took Kris’ hands and placed them on the back of his head. Whoa, he wants me to… Kris was trying to stay still, but he twined his fingers in Adam’s hair, gently.

Adam popped off softly and gazed up at Kris. “Let go…do what feels natural, Kris.”

“But…”

“It’s okay, I promise. Let go, baby. Let me take care of you.”

Wow. This is… Kris felt his eyes prickle with tears and then relaxed his body.
Grinning, Adam returned to his task. It was hard at first, trying not to think about hurting Adam, but soon Kris forgot about everything except for the glorious feeling of Adam’s hot mouth sliding up and down him, taking him in deeper than ever before. He started to grip Adam’s hair tighter and couldn’t help but buck up into his mouth a little. Adam moaned and sucked harder, which only encouraged Kris to let go completely. He felt the tip of his length hit the back of Adam’s throat and cried out softly. Faster and faster went Adam’s mouth until the sensations were almost more than Kris could bear.

“God…yes, Adam…I’m so close,” he moaned, wanting to give him enough time to pull off. But Adam only clenched Kris’ hips and swallowed him right down. It was exquisite. Kris thrust hard into Adam’s mouth and felt like he might pass out with pleasure. “Adam!” His orgasm erupted throughout his body, pumping his seed right down Adam’s throat.

Adam coughed several times, cum dribbling down his chin. But he was smiling. He wiped a hand across his mouth and beamed at Kris.

Kris had no words. His jaw hung open and tears streamed from his eyes as he stared at Adam, the love of his life who had just accepted all of him without reservation. He reached out and Adam embraced him, kissing the corners of his eyes and then his mouth. They entwined their arms and legs and kissed long and hard, tears and spit and cum everywhere. Eventually, Adam started moving against Kris rhythmically. Kris spread his legs wide Adam entered him, thrusting gently at first, then faster and faster.

Kris gave into the sensations, moaning, crying out as he fell apart for the second time and thinking that this must be what heaven felt like, vulnerable, broken open and adored...safe.

Chapter 26

Adam loved to cook. Even when he was a young boy, he could be found on many days in the kitchen with his mother helping out, and by the time he was ten years old he often made meals for his dad and brother when his mom had to work late. Every year at Thanksgiving his family raved about his homemade cranberry sauce and gravy and he was determined that this year would be no different just because he was bringing a guest. He always spent the night at his parents’ house the night before so he could get up early and get started on the food.

It was six o’clock on Wednesday evening and Adam was waiting for Kris to get off from work so they could head over to the house. Thankfully, Kris didn’t have school because of the holiday. Adam rechecked his bags to make sure he had everything he needed for the two nights they’d be staying and then stretched out on the couch.

As he lay there waiting, Adam thought about Christmas. He had been completely outraged to learn about the way that Kris’ relatives treated him, and he couldn’t wait to show them a thing or two about respect. Adam had grown up in a very loving and accepting family, both immediate and extended, and he couldn’t imagine what it must be like for his poor angel to have to tolerate such ignorance and stupidity. Adam was proud of his sexuality; it had never been an issue for him. No, his difficulties were completely wrapped around his trauma, around trust, power, weakness and control.
His self doubts and feelings of unworthiness had nothing to do with the fact that he was gay. Granted, he had endured some hardships when he first came out in high school, but on the whole it had been mild, and he’d been surrounded by support from his friends and family. *By my true friends, anyway. Fuck.*

Now that he had begun to deal more directly with his trauma in therapy, these flashes of memory seemed to be popping up more and more, even in his dreams. Sheila had warned him that this would happen and had been teaching him skills and techniques to cope with them, but it was frankly exhausting. He took a deep breath into his stomach and tried to concentrate on his heartbeat instead of the horrible images looming at the edge of his mind. *Don’t think about it, just breathe...just... fuck...it’s not working!*

He jumped up from the couch and went to the bathroom to splash some cold water on his face, but he still heard them, still heard Sam laughing maniacally in his head. *FUCK!* He looked into his scared eyes in the mirror and started to panic. Just as he was about to jump into the shower, he heard a knock on the door. Adam whipped his head around, startled and wide-eyed. *It’s just Kris...go let him in, he can help you with this. But I’m supposed to be able to do it without help dammit! The knocking came again, and Sam’s voice was getting louder, “I never loved you, you pathetic, disgusting, ugly...”* His vision began to swim as the eight men came closer and closer in his mind. Adam couldn’t deny his need for help anymore. He ran to the door and unlocked it. “Help me!” he cried out to Kris.

Kris dropped his bag and went into action immediately. He’d had some practice now and knew what to do. He led Adam into the kitchen, opened the freezer and took out two ice cubes, then pressed one into each of Adam’s hands. “Look at me, Adam, focus on my eyes, the sound of my voice. I love you, baby...I’m right here. I’m real. I love you.”

*So cold. So fucking cold! The ice was stinging his palms and Kris’ deep brown eyes were boring into his. He loves me. Kris, my angel, he loves me.* Gradually his breathing slowed and his mind became clear of everything except the cold and the love in Kris’ eyes. “It’s okay, Kris, it’s gone.” He dropped his gaze and tossed the ice into the sink, feeling the all too familiar shame creeping up. *I should have been able to do it myself.* Adam had suffered a serious disappointment when he realized that he wouldn’t be able to subdue his flashbacks by himself every single time. True, he was getting better at it, but he had ridiculously high expectations.

“Hey you,” said Kris, turning Adam around grasping his cold hands, “I know what you’re thinking. It’s okay to need help sometimes.” He kissed Adam on his chilly palm and rubbed it between his hands to warm it up.

*He’s so incredible...I don’t deserve-- fuck, Sheila said I have to stop saying that to myself.* “Thank you, angel.” He offered his other hand and tried to smile, tried to focus on the love he felt for him. “I love you,” he said to Kris, pulling him into a kiss.

Kris responded with great enthusiasm, pressing his body into Adam’s and kissing back so passionately that Adam felt weak in the knees by the time they pulled apart. “Missed you, baby,” Kris panted. “I feel like I haven’t seen you in days.”

“Damn, I want you to miss me more! What a hot kiss!” he said, feeling a bit lightheaded. “Any other time I would throw you over the table right now, but we should really get going. We’re supposed to be at my parents’ for dinner soon.”

Kris pouted and Adam couldn’t help but suck on that cute, full bottom lip, which of course meant that they didn’t leave the apartment until Kris had actually been thrown over the table and fucked within an inch of his life. They were running a bit late by the time they left, hand in hand, grinning
and giggling together and joking about how many times they were going to do it in the next two
days. “Once in every room?” suggested Kris.

“Well that’s quite ambitious, seeing as there are about twenty rooms in the house including
bathrooms and all, but hey, I’m game if you are!”

“Wow! Twenty rooms? I mean, I knew your house was enormous but…yeah I’m not sure if I’d be
able move by the time Friday hit!”

They tossed their bags in the trunk and headed out in Adam’s car. Unfortunately, he hadn’t managed
to get Kris a parking pass, which made things difficult especially when he had to park overnight. *I
could move to a place where there was better parking. Then I could get away from that stupid club,
too.* The idea of moving had been nagging at him for a while now, and the more he thought about it,
the more appealing it was. *I really need to get a job first, though. That would be more likely if you
actually looked for one.* The truth was that Adam quite enjoyed being unemployed because it gave
him lots of time with Kris in the evenings. *Yeah, but you don’t want to be a moocher forever, do
you?*

“Boys, you’re late!” exclaimed Leila when they finally arrived. They apologized and gave her hugs.
“But you’re forgiven because you are both so sweet and adorable,” she chuckled.

“Mom, let me show Kris where to put his things.”

“That can wait, honey, everyone is hungry. Kris, why don’t you just leave everything in the foyer
and Adam can show you around after dinner.”

“Of course, thank you Leila,” said Kris politely, “and thank you so much for inviting me to your
house for Thanksgiving.”

Adam snorted and Leila rolled her eyes at him. “What?” said Adam, “It was more like a command
than an invite.”

She shook her head and turned back to Kris. “It was my pleasure. I hope your parents weren’t upset
that you didn’t come home though.”

“Oh no, it’s fine. I’m going to be there next month anyways. I’m really happy to be spending time
with all of you.”

*I bet he is. Thanksgiving at his house is probably torture if his extended family comes.*

“Thank god, it’s about time! I’m starving!”

“Chill, Lucy, we’re not that late,” Adam said to his brother when they walked into the dining room.
He saw Kris looking all around with his mouth slightly open.

“Your house is incredible!”

“Thank you,” said Eber.

“Kris, you have been here before,” Adam reminded him.

“Yeah but, I was a little preoccupied and, er, I wasn’t really paying attention,” he said, blushing.

Everyone laughed. “You are too cute,” said Leila. “Please sit down. It’s just us tonight, the rest of the
family will be arriving tomorrow.”
Adam motioned for Kris to sit next to him and scooted their chairs together even closer so he could put his hand on Kris’ thigh. They smiled at each other and Adam thought about the bedroom waiting for them upstairs. *Mmmmm, this is going to be the best Thanksgiving ever.*

“Rolls, honey?” offered Leila. The food was being passed around, but Adam had been too busy staring at his hot boyfriend.

“Huh?” Adam tore his gaze away from Kris. “Oh, thanks.”

She looked at her son fondly and there were tears in her eyes.

“Mom, you okay?”

“Yes. I’m just happy, you know, really happy for you,” she said, dabbing at her eyes.

“Awww, mommie,” Adam got up and gave her a quick hug and a peck on the cheek. “I’m really happy for you, too,” he said, looking back at Kris, who was grinning broadly at them. *I love that smile.* He sat back down, squeezed Kris’ thigh and leaned over to kiss him on the ear.

“So, Kris,” Eber began, “we didn’t get a lot of time to talk during the Halloween party. I’d love to know more about the man who’s captured my son’s affection so completely. Tell us more about yourself, about how you got into music, and living in Arkansas.”

“Come on, dad, let the man eat,” said Neil.

“It’s okay, I don’t mind.” Kris wiped his mouth with a cloth napkin and sat back in his chair. “There really isn’t much to say about Arkansas, and Conway is your typical southern college town. But how I got into music?” Pink spots bloomed on his cheeks and he scratched the back of his neck. “Well, it’s kind of embarrassing actually, but when I was eleven years old I ran away from home and I brought my dad’s guitar with me. I didn’t know how to play, but I figured I’d just sit in the park and strum it and try to get enough money to buy a bus ticket.”

*Oh my god, how adorable is he?* Adam sighed and stared at Kris like a lovesick puppy while everyone else chuckled at his story.

“It turned out that I had a knack for it, and I made about twenty bucks before my parents found me and dragged me back home. After that I taught myself how to play and then I discovered I could sing, too.”

“He sings like an angel,” said Adam dreamily.

Kris gazed at him with misty eyes. “Not nearly as well as you do.”

“I think I’m going to be sick,” groaned Neil and pretended to throw up.

“Oh shut up, you’re just jealous,” said Adam, returning to his plate.

“Yeah, that must be it. Mom, please tell me you made up the guest bedroom? You know, the one that’s really far away from my room?”

Leila just laughed and ruffled Neil’s hair.

After dinner they went up to the room Adam’s mom had prepared so Kris could drop off his bag. As soon as they entered it, Adam immediately invaded Kris’ personal space. “I’m supposed to give you a tour of the house, but I really want to give you a tour of my pants instead,” he leered, pressing Kris
up against the wall.

“You’ll get no complaints here, my sexy wolf,” Kris threw back with equal heat. “I happen to worship what’s in your pants,” he said, giving Adam’s crotch a firm squeeze.

One minute into a hot kiss, Adam heard his mom calling from downstairs. “Damn!” He walked out to the hallway and leaned over the banister. “What, mom?”

“Don’t forget to show Kris where he can find towels and such!”

“I won’t!” he yelled, rolling his eyes. “Come on, let’s do this and we can play later.”

In addition to six bedrooms, three of them guest rooms, the Lambert house included several bathrooms, a den/study, an office, a game room, two sitting rooms, a main living room that connected to the kitchen, a large parlor where the Halloween party had been, a wine cellar, a finished basement and of course, a library. Kris wanted to stay in the basement and play with the karaoke machine, but Adam kept pulling him along from room to room until they finally ended the tour in Adam’s childhood bedroom. Unlike Neil, Adam never stayed in this room when he came to visit. It wasn’t triggering or upsetting because it had been cleared long ago of anything that might remind him of high school, but he liked focusing on the present instead of the past.

The room looked like it belonged to a ten year old, with old trophies on the shelves, some of Adam’s community theater costumes hanging in the closet, an enormous stuffed dog in the corner and a variety of pictures on the walls. The single bed was even covered by a Wizard of Oz bedspread. “My mom, she’s very nostalgic,” Adam explained when Kris quirked an eyebrow at the room’s decorations.

“It’s really sweet,” said Kris, looking at a trophy. “Adam Lambert, outstanding young performer of the year, 1994,” he read out loud and grinned widely at Adam, who blushed. “Awww, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you blush…how cute!” Kris kissed him on the cheek and started looking around the rest of the room.

*Why do I feel nervous all of a sudden?* Adam watched Kris examine the pictures and tried to figure out why his stomach was in knots. Kris picked up the stuffed dog and gave it a body hug. “This is so awesome! I always wanted a me-sized animal when I was little,” he said, giggling.

*Intimate. This is really, really intimate.* Having Kris in here almost felt like the first time Adam had let him into his apartment. *Vulnerable, but even more so.* Although he had never planned on letting any man into his sanctuary, the thought of one in his boyhood room was unimaginable. “I wanted a dog, but my mom is allergic,” Adam said softly. *Why didn’t I prepare myself for this?*

“Hey, are you all right? You look a little…off,” said Kris. He put down the dog and came to stand in front of Adam. “Is it me? I mean, me being in here?”

Adam nodded. He didn’t feel panicky, just…open, as if he were transparent or naked.

“Let’s go then.”

“No.” No more running, no more hiding. “Just…I need to get used to it, that’s all. I wasn’t prepared, I haven’t been in here in years.” He knew that his eyes were a bit wide and lost looking. “Can you, I mean, can we…cuddle?” he asked, feeling heat rise up his chest and neck. *I feel like a baby. It’s all right, this is important…you want to let him in, right? Yes, yes I do.*

“Of course we can.” Kris lay down on the bed and opened his arms. “Come here.”
Adam snuggled his long form into Kris the best he could and already felt a little better, safer just from
the comfort of his warm embrace. He traced a finger over the cowardly lion’s mane on the bedspread
and remembered how excited he had been when he’d landed that role all those years ago. “I was the
lion in eighth grade. I wanted that part so badly because I always loved how brave he became
without even realizing it.”

“Kind of like you,” said Kris, combing his fingers through Adam’s hair.

“Hmph. I told Sheila that it was your idea to put bravery on the list we did together.”

“And?”

“She agrees with you.”

“Smart lady.”

_I don’t feel brave. I feel like I’m holding on for dear life most of the time._ Adam closed his eyes and
listened to the sound of Kris’ steady breathing. It was like a lullaby.

“Boys? Oh…” Eber poked his head in but then ducked out and closed the door quietly.

It was completely quiet when Adam awoke in the middle of the night. Kris was sleeping practically
on top of him and he knew at once what had ‘roused’ him from slumber. He peered down and saw
that Kris’ hand was latched securely onto his hard cock. _Wonder if he’s dreaming about jerking me
off_, he thought, giggling quietly. _This could be fun._ “Kris,” he whispered into his ear, “mmmm, that
feels so good.”

Kris’ hand twitched on Adam’s crotch. _Oh yes, I am so into this._ “Oh yeah, right there…a little
harder….” he murmured, which produced exactly the result he was hoping for. Kris groaned in his
sleep and began to squeeze Adam, moving his hand up and down. “More, angel…faster.” It was
starting to feel very, very nice and he let out a real moan. Suddenly Kris’ hand froze and Adam heard
him gasp. “Don’t stop now, baby, I was just getting into it,” he chuckled.

“Adam? Oh my god, I was having the hottest dream about you.”

A band of moonshine fell across Kris’ face, making him look ethereal, otherworldly somehow, and
his beauty took Adam’s breath away. “Yeah, I noticed,” he said, all playfulness gone from his voice.
He brushed Kris’ smooth cheek with his fingertips and suddenly felt in awe of how much the
universe had blessed him with this man. “Kris, you are…” Adam shook his head, trying to find the
right words, “precious…I mean, you’re precious to me. I feel so lucky to have you in my life. I don’t
know what I’ve done to deserve you, but whatever it was I’m glad I did it.”

Kris held Adam’s palm to his cheek. “You deserve me just because you’re you.”

They locked eyes. Something unspoken passed between them and they sat up and undressed each
other slowly. The energy in the room seemed to have shifted, and it was like they were suspended in
time amidst Adam’s childhood memories in the too-small bed, their faces glowing softly in the
moonlight. Silently, Adam undressed Kris and then himself. He sat leaning against the wall and
pulled Kris back into him. “Look,” he said, pointing to the dresser mirror directly across from the
bed. _We look beautiful together._

“Wow,” whispered Kris.

“Yeah,” Adam breathed. He tilted his head and kissed Kris’ ear, but kept his face forward so he
could see himself do it, fascinated by this new way of experiencing intimacy. Eyes glued to the
mirror, Adam watched himself caress Kris’ chest and squeeze his nipples.

Kris murmured some nonsense words and let his head fall back onto Adam’s shoulder, exposing his neck and arching it towards Adam’s mouth. “Please.”

“Pack your turtlenecks, angel?”

“Mm-hmm.

Adam and his reflection bared their teeth and sank them into Kris’ neck, biting and sucking at the sinew that stood out in sharp relief. Kris gurgled and writhed, grinding his ass into Adam and stretching his head back even farther. It was incredibly sensual, being able to see Kris from all angles while marking him like this. Bet it will look even sexier when we...whoa! Kris had just thrown himself forward and spread his cheeks wide with his hands. “Need your tongue,” he moaned, face pressed into the comforter and ass high in the air.

Hmm, if I angle it just right, I can still watch. “Be right there, baby.” Adam got up and dug into his discarded pants for a condom, then adjusted the mirror on its hinges. He climbed back up behind Kris, bent over and looked up. Perfect. "Ready?

Kris just groaned in response and lifted his ass up even higher. Adam licked his lips, dug his thumbs into Kris’ hole and pulled them apart. He flicked his tongue once, twice, and then started licking Kris like a kitten lapping up a bowl of cream, thrilled that he could see himself doing it and watch Kris squirm at the same time. I’ve got to get more mirrors in my bedroom!

Kris stretched his arms out in front of him and gripped the bed tightly as he rocked back again and again. “Ohhh g-god,” he stuttered and bit the blanket.

Adam pushed his tongue in deep and then tilted his head from side to side repeatedly until Kris started moaning so loud that he would surely wake Neil. Sure enough, a loud thud came from the other side of the wall a minute later, and Kris stuffed the comforter in his mouth to muffle his wails as Adam tongue-screwed his ass over and over.

“Yum,” Adam said, sitting back at last and smacking his lips.

“Mmmph.” Kris’ body was quivering from head to toe and he nearly fell off the bed.

“Don’t go anywhere, angel, I’m not done with you yet.” He scooped Kris up in his arms and raised them to their knees, Kris’ back to his chest. “I want you to watch me drive you insane, lover,” he said, moving them close to the edge of the bed. They were only a few feet from the mirror now.

“I’m…nearly there…already,” Kris replied, his breath coming in harsh gasps.

“Hmm, not quite enough,” said Adam, also panting with desire.

A cloud moved in front of the moon and the room was suddenly pitch black. Adam took the opportunity to use the dark like a blindfold. He trailed his fingers randomly over Kris’ skin and bit him unexpectedly near the base of his neck.

“Adam!” Kris yelled out. Adam could feel Kris trembling and reached around to grasp his length without warning, causing him to cry out again.

“For the love of god!” came Neil’s voice from next-door, accompanied by a series of loud bangs on the wall.
They both snickered through their heavy breathing. “Here,” Adam said, ripping his t-shirt and offering Kris a piece of it. He pressed his fingers into Kris’ hips and pulled him down abruptly, impaling him in one thrust. The cloud shifted and light poured through the window again, shining on the two men now pulsing in rhythm together and moaning loudly into their cloth gags.

Adam devoured their reflection with his eyes, so turned on that he didn’t think he’d last very long. Sweat trickled down his temples and he fucked…fucked his lover in his boyhood bed, watching Kris drool around his gag, clamp his eyes shut in bliss, and pump his dick in frenzied strokes. It felt like almost too much pleasure was assaulting his senses but he wanted more, wanted to drown in it, choke on it. He slapped Kris hard on the thigh and was rewarded with a long, muffled scream. A few more thrusts and Kris threw his head back, his throat straining with a muted howl. Adam spit out the cloth and bit him one last time before falling apart completely at the sight of his cum hitting the mirror.

He wrapped his arms around Kris and they collapsed back onto the bed, utterly spent.

Kris pulled out his gag and threw it on the floor. “F-fuck,” he whimpered.

“Yeah.”

A minute later they were fast asleep.

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“Adam, honey, didn’t you want to get up early to start cooking? It’s seven-thirty now.” Leila knocked on the door several more times.

Forgetting that he wasn’t in a queen size bed, Adam rolled over and fell right onto the floor with Kris still in his arms. “Shit! Ow, fuck!”

“Adam? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, mom,” he called, now laughing. “I’ll be down soon.”

Kris groaned and rubbed his head. “What time is it and why are we on the floor?”

“Morning, angel, it’s seven-thirty and I kind of forgot how small this bed is,” he giggled.

“Oh my god, so early, why are we even awake?” He untangled his limbs from Adam, scrambled back into the bed and pulled the covers right up to his chin. “Come up here and snuggle me, pleaaaaase?”

How can I resist? He looks so cute in my bed, my adorable little angel. “Okay, but just for a few minutes. I have to go down and help cook.”

A half an hour later Adam was showered, dressed and in the kitchen washing cranberries. Kris had fallen asleep during their cuddling and Adam thought of him while he worked, fondly remembering their escapade last night and feeling proud of himself for handling his vulnerability so well. I’m doing it…I’m getting better, more…normal. He smiled at his mother. “Is Nana coming today?”

“She is…your uncle Charlie is bringing her around three. Give me a hand, honey.”
Adam helped her put the turkey in the oven. “I can’t wait for her to meet Kris.”

“She’s going to love him, and she’ll be so happy for you!”

Adam had always been very close to his maternal grandmother, and he knew that it grieved her to see him alone and suffering. Yes, even though he put on his best smiles whenever she came to visit, somehow she could see right through to his pain in a way that no one else could. It made his heart swell with joy that she would see how happy he was before she left this earth.

Kris came down at nine o’clock showered and dressed in a white turtleneck and jeans.

“I’m going to have to show you how to use concealer,” Adam whispered in his ear while hugging him, “it’s going to get pretty warm in this kitchen today.”

“I’ll be glad to have a private lesson any time,” he said quietly.

They both giggled and Leila beamed at them and sighed. “Good morning, Kris. Did you sleep well?”

“Yes ma’am, I mean Leila…sorry, old habits die hard,” he chuckled. “So, how can I help? I’m not much of a cook but I’d love to be useful.”

“What, you’re not satisfied with just being my eye candy all day?” Adam smirked.

Kris struck a few ridiculous poses, which made Adam and his mother laugh loudly, and finished with a twirl. “I’m a quick learner, just show me what to do.”

“How about some breakfast first, dear,” said Leila. Kris wolfed down a stack of re-warmed pancakes and rubbed his hands together eagerly, looking to Adam for instructions.

“Can I trust you with a knife?” Adam asked suspiciously, thinking about Kris’ knifeplay fetish. More like, can I handle watching him use one without getting turned on? Kris gave him a knowing glance and flushed, but held his hand out for the knife and was assigned to chop vegetables for a large platter.

Neil showed up a little later still in his pajamas and looking very grumpy.

“Morning, honey, would you like some pancakes?”

“Hmph,” he grumbled, throwing Adam a dirty look.

“What’s your problem, Lucy?”

“As if you don’t know. You realize that it took me almost an hour to get those noises out of my head before I could get back to sleep? Didn’t mom make up the guestroom for you?”

“Oh come on, we weren’t that loud…don’t be such a sourpuss.”

“Sorry, Neil, really, I’m--” Kris began, looking embarrassed.

“I don’t blame you, Kris,” said Neil with a slightly softer tone, “but dickhead here knew better.”

“Neil! Don’t talk to your brother like that,” admonished Leila. “Besides, how many times did you keep Adam up all night with your girlfriends, hmm? I’d say that he owes you some sleepless nights!”

“Ha!” Adam looked smug and Neil ate his pancakes without further complaint and went back
upstairs.

After showing Kris how to properly slice cucumbers, Adam finished cooking his cranberry sauce and set it aside to cool. “Want me to do the whipped cream, mom?”

“Yes. We’ll have about eight children for dinner so do a double batch, would you?” She took off her apron and washed her hands. “Listen, we’re short on rolls so I’m going to run to the store before it closes to get some more. Keep an eye on the turkey.”

Adam nodded and got out the large Kitchen-Aid mixer while sneaking a glance at Kris to make sure he hadn’t cut himself yet. Honestly, he’s such a guy. It’s amazing he hasn’t starved to death. He saw Kris run a finger slowly down the knife blade and shuddered, suddenly wishing that they were back upstairs. His dick twitched and he had to take a few breaths before he could concentrate again. The whipped cream needed careful monitoring and he wanted it to be perfect. When it was light and foamy, he stopped the mixer and spooned some into a small bowl so he could test it. He stuck a finger in his mouth and suddenly felt that he was being watched. Turning around, Adam saw his rabbit staring lustily at him. Mmmm, now there’s an idea.

“Come here.”

Kris moved across the room like a fish being pulled in on a line with his mouth slightly open.

Adam scooped up some more of the cream and pushed his finger into Kris’ waiting mouth, then worked it in and out…in and out, while leering suggestively and running his tongue over his lips.

Kris moaned and started sucking.

“You like that don’t you, my little rabbit?” Kris nodded and pressed himself against Adam. “My, my, you’re awfully hard. It’s too bad that I have to stay down here and cook.” Adam popped his finger out and loaded it up again. This time he dabbed a little cream right on Kris’ earlobe and then licked it off. This is fucking hot! Maybe we can play with it later. Adam had never experimented with food and sex, but the idea was incredibly tantalizing.

“Tease,” Kris groaned and tried to back Adam into the counter, but Adam heard the door slam and knew that his mom was back from the store. Later.

“Oh I am, am I?” Adam smirked, smearing whipped cream on Kris’ bottom lip. He sucked on it and then quickly sidestepped away, giggling when Kris whined in frustration.

“How’s everything going?” asked Leila, walking into the kitchen and setting down a paper grocery bag.

“Just fine, isn’t that right, Kris?” Adam said, staring pointedly at the bulge in Kris’ pants.

Kris looked down at himself and blushed right to the roots of his hair. “I, um…excuse me,” he blurted and hurried from the room.

Adam’s mom looked confused, but then saw the mischievous look on her son’s face and the bowl of whipped cream. “You are such a naughty boy!” she laughed. “Poor Kris.”

Adam laughed and checked on the turkey. “I’m sure he’ll be fine in about…five minutes.”

Or less. Kris was back and looking perfectly content in only two. He walked right up to Adam and hissed in his ear. “I am so going to get you back for that.”
“Can’t wait, angel.” They stared heatedly at each other until Leila cleared her throat.

“Shall we get back to work?”

***

“Nana!” Adam offered his arm to his grandmother and helped her into the house.

“Hello my sweet boy,” she said in a tired voice and kissed his cheek. Once inside, her sharp eyes immediately spotted Kris standing off to the side. “Well, well now! Who is this fetching young man?” she asked brightly, peering at Adam.

“Nana, this is Kris, my boyfriend.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, ma’am,” said Kris.

Nana’s wrinkled face broke into an enormous grin and her eyes suddenly sparkled with glee. “Adam, oh my goodness child, really?” She shuffled over to Kris, ignored his outstretched hand and pulled him into a great bear hug that almost knocked him off his feet. Kris looked stunned for a moment and then smiled at Adam over Nana’s shoulder and hugged her tightly.

Adam let out a little squeak of joy and clapped his hands like a five-year-old. This is my favorite day ever! Look at how happy she is!

“Hello, mother,” said Leila walking in from the kitchen. “I see you’ve met Kris,” she chuckled.

Nana finally released Kris and stepped back to examine him. “I have! And what a fine looking man, yes indeed.” She pinched his cheek and patted it. “Now Kris, I must know all about you so make sure you sit next to me at dinner. Leila dear, set our places together, won’t you?”

“I would be honored to sit by your side, ma’am,” said Kris with a big smile.

“Such a gentleman! You may call me Jane, dear.”

Leila took her mother’s coat and scarf and hung them up in the closet. “Mom, where’s Charlie? Didn’t you come with him?”

“He’s still in the car dealing with Hannah and Jessie who were arguing all the way here!” She held out both of her arms. “Adam? Kris?” They smiled at each other and escorted Nana to the sitting room.

By four o’clock the house was packed with relatives, many of whom were local and had met Kris at the Halloween party, although they had not had their children with them at the time. But Adam’s aunt Justine flew in from Oregon with her partner Heather, and two of Adam’s older cousins had driven several hours to get there. Kris greeted everyone politely and gracefully handled their questions and curiosity.

He looks like he fits right in with everyone. I wonder how it will be for me at his house? Adam scowled at that, but was distracted from his thoughts by his eleven-year-old cousin, Hannah. “Adam, can you tell Jessie that my jeans are cool and not last year?” He laughed and assured her that they were the height of fashion. Where’s my angel? I can’t even see him anymore. “Kris?” he called over
all the noise, “can you help me with something upstairs?” Kris stepped around a group of people and hurried to join Adam. They trotted up the stairs to their guest room and shut the door.

“Phew! I feel like some kind of celebrity,” Kris laughed. “Thanks for the breather, baby.”

“Are you okay?” Adam asked him with genuine concern. “I know they can get kind of intense.”

“I’m fine. I love your family and I’m really touched by their acceptance of me, of us,” he said a bit wistfully.

Adam frowned, wishing he could make Kris’ family different for him, and swept him up in a fierce hug. “Don’t worry, we’ll help them see the light.”

“I love you so much,” he said, burying his face in Adam’s neck.

“Me, too.” Adam lifted Kris’ chin and captured his lips with his own. He tried to pour every ounce of love and comfort into the kiss and ran his hands through Kris’ hair, down his back, pulling him in closer and tighter and instinctually moving them toward the bed. Of course, they were in a house full of people on Thanksgiving Day and no one was going to leave them alone until much later.

“Adam! Your mother needs you in the kitchen!” called Eber.

Adam sighed and pulled Kris up from the bed. “Come on, lover, as soon as dinner is on the table, I’ll be more free to play.”

“Damn, your family is cockblocking me!” said Kris in mock outrage. “I want my sexy wolf already!” he insisted, laughing. “Let’s go, your skills in the kitchen are in high demand.”

“Mmmm, only you know about my special skills in the kitchen.”

Kris shivered and pulled Adam out of the room before they ended up back in bed.

The ‘ooos and ahhhs’ grew louder and louder as Leila and Adam brought out one dish after another, filling up the massive dining room table. “Daddy, I want to sit next to cousin Adam!” whined fourteen-year-old Jessie. “No, it’s my turn! You sat next to him last year!” argued Hannah. “Girls, girls!” said their father, looking at his ex-wife for help. Holly chuckled and took the sisters off to the side for a chat. At last the turkey was in place and everyone was seated. Nana, the matriarch of the clan, sat at the head of the table with Kris to her right and Adam next to him. Eber was at the other end, Leila and Neil on either side of him.

Adam’s dad stood up and cleared his throat. “Every year we come together to give thanks and to celebrate family, and I’d like to start off the tradition this year, if nobody minds.” Nobody did. Eber took a sip of water and continued. “I am thankful for love. When I look around this table I see people who love each other, people who have supported one another throughout the years no matter what and it makes me feel blessed to be a part of this family. In particular, I am thankful that my son Adam has found love,” his voice wavered a bit and he had to take a moment to compose himself before going on, “and I am thankful for Kris, who clearly loves him in return.” A hush filled the room and a few people sniffed, including Nana.

Then everyone turned to look at the couple and smiled. In any other family, this may all have seemed over the top, but every single adult at that table knew what had happened to Adam and understood how he had suffered and been alone all these years. In their eyes, the fact that he had fallen in love was indeed a momentous occasion worthy of recognition.

Adam looked at the faces smiling at him and couldn’t stop the few tears that slid down his cheek. He
glanced at Kris and saw that his eyes were also glassy. They leaned in and kissed each other briefly, tenderly. A collective sigh floated around the table, Nana blew her nose on a kerchief, and the younger children giggled. *This is how things should be...I'm so lucky.* That happy thought was usually foreign to Adam, who had spent the past ten years wrestling with his bitterness at the universe for dealing him such a hard blow in high school.

It was Leila’s turn next, but she was in no state to speak. She merely mouthed, “I love you,” to Adam through her tears and buried her face in a napkin. Then Neil stood up. “Ahem, well this year in addition to being thankful for family and peace and goodwill, etcetera, I’d like say thanks to my boss, who has finally realized that I deserve a promotion!” “Wow, Neil that’s wonderful!” “Congratulations!” Everyone clapped for him and his parents smiled proudly. “Thank you. Of course, that means that I’ll be moving, since my new job will be based out of New York.” Much dismay followed Neil’s announcement, but in the end they were happy for his opportunity to further his journalism career. “And,” Neil continued, “as much as I torment my older brother, I, too am very happy for him. Cheers, my brother, I love you.” He raised his glass to Adam and drank.

Adam copied Neil and tried to swallow the lump in his throat with a large gulp of wine. The tradition went on around the table and many people included their happiness for Adam and Neil in their speeches. As it got closer to his turn, Adam started feeling nervous and fidgety. Normally he said the same thing every year, a brief thank you to his family for their love, but there was usually an undercurrent of sadness that went with it as he watched couples, parents and children interact intimately, knowing that he would never have what they had. He had always envisioned growing old alone, childless and resentful. But now…maybe it won’t be that way. *Even if something happened with me and Kris…* he shuddered at the thought…*I’m different now; so maybe my future will be different, too.* Adam suddenly grasped Kris’ hand tightly and prayed that they would always be together somehow.

“Adam, it’s your turn, son.”

He wiped his sweaty palms on his thighs and stood up. *Don’t cry, just keep it together.* “Well, I’m thankful for my family. You guys have always supported me and loved me no matter what. Today, I want to thank you for how sweet you have been to Kris like I knew you would be. Special thanks to my parents and of course, my awesome kid brother who I love even when he bangs on my wall in the middle of the night.” Neil snickered and gave him the thumbs up. “I’m thankful for Sheila, the most patient lady I know who isn’t my mother,” he said, winking at Leila. “I’m thankful for Ali, who’s with her own family today, for being the best friend a guy could ever want. But mostly, I’m thankful for Kris, who is teaching me that love is a great healer of wounds.” He looked down at Kris and smiled. “I love you, angel. You have given me hope.” Adam squeezed his hand and sat down quickly, willing himself not to burst into tears in front of everyone. *I did it.* He knew he had just given his family a gift, and they deserved it after everything they had done for him over the years.

He wiped at his eyes and took another sip of wine, trying not to look at anyone because he knew they were moved and he might just cry if he saw their faces. Kris stood up next and Adam saw his hands shaking a little. His cheeks were pink and he played with his napkin as he geared up to speak. He swallowed, took a deep breath and put his napkin down. “I’ve never been good at this kind of thing, but you all have made me feel so welcome that it makes it a little easier. I’m thankful for my parents and my brother back in Arkansas. They have always loved me for who I am and I’m grateful. I’m thankful for my best friend, Matt, who always knows how to cheer me up. I’m thankful that I am here today with all of you…Adam is truly lucky to have you. Thank you, for accepting me and for being happy for us. Thank you for loving my Adam.”

*’My Adam’… huh, I kind of like that.* Adam had never felt like he belonged to anyone before; it would have been a sign of weakness and loss of control.
Kris smiled, looking more relaxed now, and went on. “I’m thankful that God brought Adam into my life. He is teaching me about being myself and about true courage in the face of fear. I love you, baby.”

“Oh my lord,” said Nana suddenly, “I don’t think my poor heart can take much more of this! Boys, your sweetness is going to send me to the grave way before my time. Show us some tongue already so we can eat!”

The table exploded in laughter and the children looked a bit confused. Chuckling, Adam stood up and bent Kris back into a passionate, open-mouthed kiss, drawing gasps from his little cousins and whoops and hollers from the adults. Nana banged her tiny old fist on the table in appreciation and called for Eber to carve the turkey.

Adam and Leila had outdone themselves this year and they were glowing with the praise heaped on them by satisfied family members all patting their bellies. Kris was deep in conversation with Nana about his family and Adam was entertaining the children with impressions. “Do daffy duck!” cried aunt Lorraine’s ten-year-old, Jonathan. “No, no, Hannah Montana is way funnier,” said Jefferey, Holly’s son from her current marriage. “Children, let cousin Adam eat,” said Holly’s husband, Jay.

After dinner it was time for dessert, and Adam got up to help his mom clear the table and bring in the pies. He sat down with his favorite raspberry rhubarb and struck up a conversation with his aunt Justine about her idea to move to a state that allowed same sex marriage.

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“That’s an outrage!” cried Nana, starting in on her pumpkin pie. “Kris dear, if I thought you’d let me, I would come to your house for Christmas myself and give them a piece of my mind!”

Kris chuckled. “Well Adam is coming home with me, so we’ll just see how that goes.”

“Is he now? Good boy, Adam!” she said, leaning across Kris to pat Adam’s hand. “You give them my regards, you hear me?”

Adam nodded and spooned a huge dollop of whipped cream onto his pie. “I will, Nana, don’t you worry about that.” Mmmm, this turned out great! He licked his lips and dug in. Uncle Charlie captured Nana’s attention and Kris picked up his fork. Adam was feeling very naughty all of a sudden. “Oh raabbiitt,” he sang softly into Kris’ ear. Kris turned his head to find Adam sucking on a creamy finger.

“You bad wolf,” Kris hissed. Adam’s action was like the green light to the start of a race, and they both instantly dropped their hands under the table and went for each other’s crotches, battling and knocking hands aside to see who would get the prize.

“What are you guys doing?” asked Jonathan from across the table.

Adam looked at him and tried to come up with something appropriate. “Um, we’re thumb wrestling!”

“Yes!” said Kris, taking advantage of Adam’s lapse in concentration to go in for the kill. “And I just won!” he crowed, firmly grasping Adam’s cock in triumph. “I am so glad you decided to wear loose jeans today, baby,” he laughed quietly, rubbing and squeezing. He turned back to Nana but
continued to stroke Adam. “So, Jane, tell me more about growing up in Chicago.”

The look on Adam’s face was priceless. *That little punk! I am so going to…mmmmm, that feels…ohhhh yeah…*

“Adam, how is your job going?” asked Heather, jolting him out of his trance.

“Huh? Oh, it’s uh…I…” *Fuck…oh god… “Actually I quit my job and…and…”* he stuttered, “I haven’t found…” *Oh shit…ohhhhh… “um, another one yet…” Right there, right… “Um, will you excuse me? I think…the wine is…running…”* Kris gave a particularly hard squeeze. “Oh!” Adam yelped, banging his knee on the table.

“Are you okay?”

Adam pushed back his chair, panting slightly. “Fine, Heather, um…I just need to…Kris?”

“Yes?” Kris said with feigned innocence, removing his hand and placing both elbows on the table.

“Come with me,” he said, eyes staring hot daggers.

“Uh oh, I think I’m in trouble,” he winked at Nana, who giggled conspiratorially.

“Where are you going, honey?” asked Leila.

“We need more wine.”

Adam’s mom laughed. “Actually we do. Grab a couple bottles of pinot noir while you’re down there.”

He clenched Kris’ hand and dragged him out of the dining room, but not before Kris smiled goofily and waved to everyone. “If we’re not back in ten minutes, someone call an ambulance for me!”

Loud guffaws followed them out and down the hallway.

“Think you’re clever, don’t you, my little rabbit?”

“A bit. You going to punish me?” Kris asked hopefully, skipping along to keep up with Adam’s long strides.

Adam didn’t answer. *He’s going to be a hot mess by the time I’m done with him! Let’s just see how cocky he is when we get back upstairs! The cellar was down two floors directly under the dining room, but Adam knew that it was completely soundproof because he remembered yelling at the top of his lungs when Neil had locked him in there as a child and nobody had heard him.*

Once in the cellar, he took Kris into the wine room and closed the heavy wooden door. Then he turned to his love-prey, licking his lips and trying to absorb the strange mixture of love, power and vulnerability coursing through him. It made him feel jumpy instead of the cool control he was used to. “Do you know how crazy you make me?” he said through gritted teeth, pushing Kris up against the stone wall and trapping his hands above his head. “I can’t figure out whether I should ravage you, submit to you or make sweet, sweet love to you.”

Kris lifted his knee and pressed it in between Adam’s thighs. “All of the above sounds good to me. But if you want to know what I want right now…”

“Yeah, actually, I really do.” *Since I can’t seem to figure it out at the moment.* His head was spinning with lust and love and some weird, emerging desire for Kris to be in control of the situation.
“I want to pin your hips against this wall and suck your dick until you almost come,” Kris said, wrenching his hands out of Adam’s grasp. “And then I want you to put that hot cock of yours so far up my ass that I’ll feel it for days,” he leered, rubbing his knee into Adam’s crotch.

“Goddamn, I love it when you talk dirty!” Adam panted, wildly aroused by Kris’ assertiveness. He backed up a foot and Kris turned the tables at once, spinning them around and firmly, but not aggressively, pressing Adam into the wall. Shit…I fucking love this! Wide-eyed, Adam let Kris unfasten his pants and push them down to his ankles. His cock sprang out from his boxer-briefs, hard and leaking.

Kris ran a finger down its length and thumbed the liquid beading at the slit. He grinned wickedly, dropped down to his knees and immediately took Adam all the way into his mouth and down his throat.

“Holy fuck!” Adam’s knees buckled but Kris held him to the wall, biceps rippling as he slurped, sucked and devastated his lover.

“Kris! Angel…oh my f-fucking god!” Adam wound his fingers into Kris’ hair and tried to thrust into his mouth, but he couldn’t. Kris was restraining him and he absolutely, surprisingly loved it. He submitted completely, letting his arms go slack and relying on Kris to help hold him up.

“Adam? Cousin Adam, are you down here?” a young girl’s voice called.

“Hannah! Come back here right now!”

“Ow! Okay fine. Let go of my arm, I’m coming! Adam if you’re down here, hurry up and finish your game with Kris so we can play!”

Adam couldn’t help it. As soon as the voices faded, he burst into a fit of giggles. Kris, still on his knees with Adam’s cock in his mouth, snorted once, but he would not be distracted from his mission. He hallowed his cheeks and sucked hard, effectively changing Adam’s laughter into moans of pleasure, and bobbed his head faster and faster.

“Oh…oh god…yes…yesss…OH!”

Kris pulled off and wrapped his hand tightly around the base of Adam’s cock.

“Fuck! Shitshitshit…” Adam cursed at being denied his release. Suddenly he was not confused at all. Going to pound him into this stone so hard his back will be raw! He pulled Kris up by the arms, tore off his shirt and pointed to the wall.

Had the cellar not been soundproof, Kris’ shouts of pleasure and pain would have reverberated throughout the entire house. But they had no idea that someone was listening to every sound they
made. It was Brian, Adam’s 18-year-old cousin who had been struggling with his sexual identity for the last few years, and he had his ear pressed right against a crack in the wine room door.

“Adam! Adam! Ahhhh shit! Goddamnit! Harder…fuck me harder! Yes baby!”

Brian shoved his hand down his pants and moaned softly to the sounds of the two men fucking behind the door. He jerked himself off and ran back upstairs just in time.

The door flew open and Kris staggered into the cellar, holding his white turtleneck in his arms and looking completely fucked out. Adam joined him. He huffed a breath on his knuckles and rubbed them on his shoulder proudly. “Ahhhhh, yep! Not too shabby if I do say so myself. How you doing there, angel?”

“Damn.” Kris wobbled a little and leaned against the wall, but winced and stood up at once. “I think I need some cleaning up before this shirt is going back on,” he said, grinning.

Adam grabbed the sides of Kris’ face and kissed him. That was unbelievable! I felt so powerful…but different.

It had been the closest thing to what he’d done with those nameless men, raw power and domination, but this time he was motivated by love instead of fear. “God, I love you. Do you know that?” he asked, shaking Kris by the shoulders a bit.

“Yeah,” Kris chuckled, “I’m feeling it…I really am, baby.”

Adam laughed and hugged him gingerly. “Come on. There’s a bathroom we can hit before we go back.”

By the time they rejoined the family, the adults were in the living room enjoying an after dinner drink. “More wine, anyone?” said Adam, holding up the bottles he’d brought up from the cellar.

“Well don’t you look like the cat that caught the canary!” laughed Nana. “I’m fine, dear, but it seems like Kris could sure use a drink.”

Adam poured them both a glass. “So, what did we miss?”

“Well, the children are up in the game room,” said aunt Lorraine, “and we’ve just been chattering away. My poor Brian is probably bored out of his mind,” she said, indicating the young man sitting quietly in the corner. “He had to escape us for a while…we’re such old fogies.”

Kris smiled at Brian, who blushed deeply.

“Well I don’t know about the rest of you, but I think we should definitely do karaoke tonight. Last year was a blast!” Neil piped up.

“Excellent!” said Kris, “I’ve been wanting to play with that thing ever since I saw it yesterday.”

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“You’re just to good to be true, can’t take my eyes off of you…” Leila sang to her husband, falling into him and laughing. The karaoke party was winding down. There were kids sleeping in various corners of the basement and Nana was passed out on the couch.

“Mom,” Leila said, shaking Nana. “Time to go, Charlie is getting the kids bundled up.” Nana sat up
and grumbled a bit. “Kris, dear, give an old lady a hand.” He and Adam helped her up and walked her upstairs to the foyer. “I have no doubt that we will be seeing each other again,” she said to Kris and hugged him.

“Absolutely,” said Kris.

“Adam, he’s a keeper.”

“I know, Nana, I know,” Adam said, hugging her tightly.

“You boys treat each other right.”

“We will,” they chorused.

One by one the relatives left and Adam disappeared into the kitchen to help his mom clean up a bit. Oh, I almost forgot about this. Well now, can’t have it going to waste, can we? His heart began to race at the exciting possibilities.

“Whatcha doing, beautiful?” asked Kris, coming up behind Adam and snaking his arms around him.

“Just putting things away.” He turned around in Kris’ arms and hid the bowl of whipped cream with his body. “So just how tired are you, angel?”

“Me? Oh I could be up for hours still,” he said suggestively. “How about you?”

Adam waggled his eyebrows and whispered into Kris’ ear. “I’m up for you all the time.”

“Okay I think that will do it. Adam, will you turn the lights off when you go upstairs?”

“Sure, mom. Is everyone else in bed already?”

Leila smiled at him. “Yes. Have fun boys, but try not to keep Heather and Justine up, they’re in the guest room next to yours.”

“No problem. G’Night.”

After she left the kitchen, Kris let go of Adam and went for the bowl on the counter. “Uh-huh, I knew it! Trying to be sneaky are you?”

“Such a clever rabbit,” Adam smirked. “Is the rabbit still hungry for something sweet?”

“Yes he is,” Kris said eagerly.

“Then open wide.”

Kris opened his mouth and sucked on Adam’s finger of cream. “More,” he said, smacking his lips after it was all gone.

“So greedy. I think I’m hungry, too. Why don’t we share?” Adam picked up the bowl, dipped his tongue in the fluffy substance and scooped up enough to share over a long kiss. Kris sucked on his tongue and they moved the sugary cream back and forth, swallowing and moaning.

“Fuck, I can think of other things you are good at sucking on, gorgeous,” said Adam, breathing hard.

“Mmmm, why don’t we take this somewhere more private?” suggested Kris.
Adam grabbed the bowl and Kris’ hand, and they practically ran upstairs, flicking off the lights as they went.

The guest room was fairly large and had a king-sized bed in it. By the time the two men reached the room, they were in a silly mood. Adam put the bowl on the nightstand and they collapsed onto the bed, giggling and kissing and rolling around, undressing each other and tossing clothes everywhere. Adam was careful not to put too much pressure on Kris’ scratched up back and they ended up naked and facing one another on their sides, panting and smiling giddily. Adam reached over to the bowl and plopped a bit of whipped cream on Kris’ nose. Kris tried to lick it, but his tongue wasn’t long enough.

Adam sucked it off and kissed the tip of his nose. He combed his fingers through Kris’ hair, feeling like an actor in a cheesy romantic comedy, but he didn’t care.

Kris pulled the bowl between them, scooped out a large handful and smeared a stretch of Adam’s neck with white. “I won’t leave a mark,” he assured him, rolling Adam onto his back. He started at the base of his neck, teasing and nipping gently at first, then licking long stripes with the flat of his tongue.

Adam moaned softly and arched his head back. “More.” His request was granted at once, and soon Kris was straddling him. He painted cream all over Adam’s throat and erased it in large licks and soft bites with the tiniest bit of teeth. “Yesss,” Adam hissed and began to roll his hips up into Kris.

“Not so fast. There’s still so much skin to taste, and you, my sexy boyfriend, make incredible whipped cream.”

Adam shuddered and stilled his hips. “I want some too, then.” He sat up and Kris slid off. They rose to their knees, chest to chest and came together in a sugary kiss. Kris started dabbing points of cream all over Adam’s freckles and played connect the dots with his tongue while Adam munched on Kris’ shoulders and neck. Their skin grew sticky with dried spit and sugar but it didn’t stop them from treating each other like succulent desserts. They finally fell over, writhing together as their need intensified, cream and pre-cum sliding and sticking between them. Kris grabbed more from the bowl and lubed up Adam’s cock. Adam followed suit and they pumped each other messily, groaning louder and louder.

Panting hard, Kris stopped for a moment and grinned slyly. “I know a way we can keep both of our mouths busy so we won’t wake anyone up.”

“Oh? Do tell, you little minx,” said Adam, his chest heaving.

Kris whispered into his ear, blushing a bit.

“Hot fucking damn!” said Adam. “I definitely want to try that!” *He is just full of wonderful ideas! I never knew I had so much to learn about sex.*

Kris chuckled and rotated his body so that his head was at Adam’s knees. They shifted on the bed until they were comfortable on their sides with both mouths poised at each other’s groin. “Almost gone,” said Kris, examining what was left of the fluffy cream.

“Let’s put the last of it to good use then,” Adam said, licking his lips and staring hungrily at Kris’ dick, astounded at how much he was craving it.

Seconds later, their hard lengths were slicked with sweet cream and their mouths were watering. Adam couldn’t wait any longer. He slid his lips down and lapped up the cream on his way, but then
he felt Kris do the same and stopped, moaning with his mouth full. Kris kept going and it was hard
not to just lay there and enjoy it, but he wanted to pleasure Kris, too and he loved the taste of that
pulsing, sweet, cock in his mouth. Adam began to suck again and his head swam with the dual
sensations…sugar, heat, smooth skin on the one hand and exquisite pressure to his dick on the other.

The men stuffed their faces with each other, sucking and licking, slurping and popping lips around
sticky candy canes. They started moving their hips, bucking and thrusting into eager mouths, their
grunts and groans muffled by cock. Adam sucked harder and faster and swallowed down the mixture
of salt and sweet, out of his mind with bliss as Kris took him all the way in.

They couldn’t get enough. On and on it went and Adam never wanted it to end, but he couldn’t deny
the tightening of his balls and the building pleasure sweeping throughout his body. Their thrusts
became erratic. Adam felt Kris bare down with his lips and gasped out a muted cry. Faster…faster…
they feasted, gorged themselves…pounding into each other’s mouths…desperate for release now…
harder…frenzied…and then…

Adam shouted as little white spots burst behind his eyes and he came hard into Kris’ mouth. Kris
milked him, sucking…sucking…squeezing with his lips and yelling suddenly with his own orgasm.
Jets of hot cum poured down Adam’s throat and he gulped and swallowed again and again,
coughing a little as he drank it all down. As soon as it was almost gone he whipped his body around,
pounced on Kris and kissed him ferociously, swirling cum into his mouth and reveling at the hint of
sweetness still lingering.

Kris wrapped his arms and legs around Adam and clung to him as they kissed, both a complete mess
of sticky fluids.

Slowly, gradually, their passion turned to tenderness and hot kisses gave way to loving pecks. Adam
spooned around Kris and held him tightly, bereft of any words to describe the absolute eroticism of
what they had just done. “You, my little rabbit, are a sexy wolf, too,” Adam said hoarsely, closing
his eyes as exhaustion washed over him.

Kris giggled quietly, yawned and fell asleep in Adam’s embrace.

Chapter 27

Kris was in a bad mood. There was almost nothing he hated more than the mania of holiday
shopping. If he hadn’t had to work, he wouldn’t go near a store on Black Friday even if someone
paid him to. It was a miracle that he’d managed to convince his boss to let him come in at noon on
the day after Thanksgiving since he didn’t normally work on Fridays. But that was the extent of his
luck, and he’d been called in for overtime on the weekend and evenings, which seriously cut into his
time with Adam. Plus, the frenzy of the shoppers and the media and the goddamn Christmas songs
already playing everywhere just reminded him how far things had strayed from the true meaning of
the holiday. And then, of course, he had the wonderful anticipation of pretending to be straight
during family holiday gatherings. Hell, in previous years, they’d even gone so far as to ask him if
he’d met any pretty girls recently.

All in all, Kris tended to become sulky and grumpy this time of year. He tried to hold on to the bliss
of Thanksgiving with the Lambert’s, but a week of fake smiles at Macy’s had taken its toll and a
recent phone call with his mom hadn’t helped in the least.
Grumbling and short tempered, he drove to Adam’s house after another exhausting Friday of work, thinking about what a wuss he had been for being afraid to tell his mom about bringing Adam home for Christmas. Absolutely pathetic. Kris knew what she would have said; he could almost hear her placating voice in his head: you know we’d love to have him, honey, but if people knew he was coming then no one would show up. He gripped the steering wheel in frustration and wished for the hundredth time that he didn’t care about what they thought. And why can’t she stand by me? Why does she care if they show up? We should just have Christmas without them this year! Shit! Why is there never any parking? Fuck.

By the time Kris climbed the steps and knocked on Adam’s door he was pissed, angry with his family, the stupid commercialism of Christmas, the overtime at work and the fucking lack of parking.

“Angel! God I missed you!” Adam exclaimed with a huge smile, opening his arms.

Kris grunted and hugged him, trying to forget his bad mood and relax into Adam’s embrace, but it wasn’t working.

“Jesus, you’re tense. Hard day at work?”

“You could say that,” answered Kris, pulling back and dumping his coat and backpack on a chair. “I had to break up a fight between two women over a stupid sweater. A sweater! Can you believe that?” He plopped down on the couch and sighed, running his fingers through his hair and massaging his temples. “And I’m just like my mom and all the speakers at work are blaring carols and I couldn’t find parking and my head is killing me.”

“Whoa, slow down there.” Adam sat down next to Kris and rubbed his back. “One thing at a time. Let’s take care of your headache first, okay?” He kissed Kris on the cheek and went to the kitchen, returning with a bottle of Advil and a glass of water. “Here, take these and let me rub your shoulders a bit.”

Kris accepted the pills and sat on the floor in between Adam’s legs. He sighed again as Adam began to knead the stress away and dropped his chin to his chest. “That feels amazing, thank you…I really needed this.” Slowly the pain in his head dulled and he fell back against the couch, looking upside down at Adam’s concerned face.

“Come up here, angel.” Adam pulled Kris up into his arms and hugged him tightly.

I don’t care that he’s holding me like a baby. I need this right now. Kris buried his face into Adam’s neck and breathed in his scent. He inhaled deeply and felt his body relax even more.

“Now, what’s all this about being like your mom?” Adam asked, stroking Kris’ head.

Kris really didn’t want to talk about it; he’d rather just sit here in Adam’s arms and get drunk on his smell all night. “Can we talk about that some other time? I’m just so tired and I don’t have the energy to get all worked up again…hey, what happened to your wall?” He sat up and stared at the fist-sized hole that he’d been too preoccupied to notice when he came in.

Adam tensed, suddenly looking both defiant and ashamed. “I punched it earlier today.”

I bet he had another flashback or something. Kris pursed his lips and picked up Adam’s right hand to examine it. Sure enough, the skin on his knuckles was red and raw. “Did you, you know, have a--”

“No. I was just thinking about it and I got mad,” he said looking down at his lap.

“I’m glad.” Adam stared at him. “I am, I mean, okay so your landlord might not be too happy, but
it’s good that you’re mad about it.”

“That’s what Sheila said. But I can’t go around hitting things or breaking things all the time. She said I should join a gym or get a punching bag.”

“Sounds like a good idea. I could’ve totally used one earlier today.” Kris sniffed Adam’s neck again.

“Why are you smelling me?” he asked, chuckling.

“Mmmm, because it’s intoxicating. You smell like, well…you, and I can’t seem to get enough of it.” He nuzzled in for another whiff, feeling more content now, but Adam lifted Kris’ chin up and gazed into his eyes.

“I can’t believe I haven’t kissed you yet,” he said softly.

“Nothing stopping you now.”

“So true,” Adam whispered, pressing his lips to Kris’.

Now this will certainly take my mind off of things. He licked Adam’s lips and was granted immediate access. It felt like days since they had kissed instead of just last night. Kris shifted so he was straddling Adam on the couch and tried to taste every inch of that hot mouth, sweeping his tongue into every corner. They both moaned and started grinding their groins together, Kris bearing down with his hips and Adam thrusting up with his.

“How can I be so hot for you all the time?” said Adam through his heavy breathing. He grabbed Kris by the hips and worked them into a rhythm. Kris rested his chin on Adam’s shoulder and thrust, their cocks rubbing together to create a delicious friction. It seemed that neither wanted anything more than to simply come like this. Kris increased his pace, swiveling his hips a little at the end of each grind. There it is. He heard the telltale sounds of Adam about to fall apart; he recognized it now, that repetition of ‘oh’s’ leading up to it. “Yes, angel, yes…oh…oh…” It was like a beautiful, sexy melody to Kris’ ears and he couldn’t wait for the climax of the song. “Come on, baby, come for me…come for-- shit…yesssss!!” Kris’ orgasm caught him by surprise; he’d been so focused on Adam. The pleasure rushed through him but he didn’t stop his movements.

Adam’s cries grew louder and louder until he threw his head back and bit his lip, gripping bruises into Kris’ hips and shuddering.

A sudden clap of thunder startled them both and they clung to each other as adrenaline coursed through their veins and added to their sexual highs. Heart racing, Kris pressed his nose into Adam’s chest and breathed deeply, feeling almost tipsy with the smell of sex that was now in the mix.

Adam grabbed Kris’ head and panted into his mouth. There was another loud bang and then the sound of rain pelting the windows. “That was…so…hot,” said Adam.

“Very,” Kris agreed, his lips millimeters from Adam’s.

“It’s raining.”

“Good thing I’m spending the night…my car is parked two blocks away.”

“No work tomorrow?”

“No, thank god. I probably would have killed the first person to ask me a question,” Kris chuckled.
Adam closed the small gap between their mouths and sucked on Kris’ bottom lip, humming a little as he did so. “So tasty.”

“Speaking of tasty, I am starving. Did you eat already?”

“Of course not. I was waiting for you, angel. I’m making stir fry tonight.”

“Damn, how lucky am I that my boyfriend is such an amazing cook?” Sure beats the peanut butter and jelly sandwich I had during my dinner break last night.

“Well let’s clean up and I’ll get started.”

About ten minutes later they were in the kitchen dressed in pajama bottoms and t-shirts with Adam at the stove and Kris chopping vegetables. “I swear I’m going to teach you how to cook so you don’t die of malnutrition.”

“Hey, there’s lots of protein in peanut butter,” sad Kris in mock offense.

Adam snorted, dropped some strips of beef into the sizzling skillet and started frying them. “Here, come over and try this,” he said, holding out the wooden spoon to Kris.

Kris looked dubious. “Umm…”

“Oh come on, it’s not that hard.”

I’ll probably end up burning it. He took the spoon and tried to copy what Adam had been doing.

“Let me show you.” Adam stood behind him and guided his hand.

Mmmm, yeah I could get used to this, he thought, feeling the heat of Adam all up and down the back of his body. The spoon slipped a little into the pan.

“Pay attention, angel,” Adam laughed.

“Well it’s hard to concentrate when there’s a sexy wolf pressing his hot body up against me,” Kris said cheekily.

“Hmmm,” said Adam, nibbling on Kris’ earlobe.

“Yeah, and that’s not helping at all.”

Adam giggled. “Go back to your vegetables.” He took the spoon back and smacked Kris on the ass with it.

By the time they had finished eating, the storm outside was raging. Adam went into his bedroom to check that water wasn’t coming in through his taped up window. “I can’t believe they haven’t fixed that yet,” he said, clearing the plates from the table. “I put in a maintenance request weeks ago.”

“I know the feeling. Matt and I can’t get anything fixed at our place. We’re lucky that we even have heat.”

“You know,” said Adam, “I’ve been thinking a lot about moving.”

“Oh? Where to?”

“I’m not sure. But I can’t stand being so close to the club anymore and plus, I’d like to find a place
that has better parking.”

“Well I’m all in favor of that!” Kris exclaimed. “When were you thinking?”

Adam turned and looked at Kris with an unreadable expression on his face. “I need to get a job first. I started putting feelers out this week and…well, I’ve been thinking about something else, too.”

_He looks almost nervous, or scared…hard to tell._ “What is it, baby?”

“I…it’s just that I love you so much, angel, and maybe…well, would you, you know…want to move in with me?”

_Oh shit. This is not going to be pretty._ Kris knew that it was too soon for them to take that step, but…_shit, shit, shit._ He looked into Adam’s hopeful eyes and felt like the storm outside was nothing compared to what was about to happen in that kitchen. _Will he cry? Get mad? Oh god…why did he have to ask me this? _“Baby…I love you so much, too. I would love to be with you twenty-four seven, but…”

“But?” Adam’s eyes darkened. “You don’t want to, do you?”

“No, I do, it’s just…I think it’s too soon, that’s all.” Kris held his breath, waiting.

“Too soon? But you’re here practically every day anyway. What would be the difference? And you’d have your own parking spot, and…and…” He sounded desperate, and it was killing Kris.

“Adam, listen. It’s a big step, trust me, I’ve been through this before. It might not seem like it would be different, but it is.” He leaned across the table and took Adam’s hands in his.

“But I want to be with you all the time, angel. I can’t help it…I feel like I need you so much.”

“That’s part of what I’m worried about. Don’t you see?”

“No.” Adam yanked his hands away and stood up. “I’m not a damaged freak…I’m not a damaged freak,” he repeated, more to himself than to Kris.

_Oh no. No, no, no. Crap! He thinks I’m rejecting him completely! _“Adam, I love you. Listen to me…I love you, okay? I’m not going to leave you. Adam.”

Adam was pacing, tugging at his hair and muttering to himself. “Angel loves me…he loves me…he’s not leaving me…I’m not a damaged freak…”

_What the hell am I supposed to do?_ The urge to make things right, to do anything he could to make Adam happy right now was overwhelming. Kris felt it deep in his gut and was scared that if he didn’t fix things that something bad was going to happen. “Please, baby, please, look at me.” He stepped into Adam’s path and held out his arms so that Adam walked into them.
It seemed to jolt him a bit and his eyes focused on Kris, but they were wide and frightened. He clenched Kris’ arms painfully and his breath was coming in harsh gasps now. “I can’t…breathe…Kris, angel…I can’t…” Adam grabbed at his chest, looking panicked.

“Oh my god, you’re having a panic attack! Okay…okay, let me think…” His brother used to have these when he was little. What did we do? Adam’s skin was starting to turn alarmingly pale. “Slow breaths…” He wrenched himself away and hurried to the cupboard, trying to find a paper bag. “Got it! Adam, breathe into this…come on now, nice a slow for me.” Adam puffed rapidly into the small brown bag. “Easy, easy, baby.” Kris rubbed circles on his back and kept up a stream of soothing words. “Look at me, listen to my voice…that’s it, slow down now.” It was working. Gradually Adam’s breathing grew less frenzied and he started to make the bag deflate and inflate slowly. “Good, that’s good.”

At last Adam took the bag away from his mouth and dropped it on the floor; he was shaking all over and still had fear in his eyes.

“Come with me, come on.” Kris led Adam into the bedroom and they lay down together. “God, you’re freezing!” He covered Adam with his body and pulled the blankets over them. Poor baby, he’s still so insecure! “My beautiful Adam, I love you so much.”

Adam shivered and clung to Kris. “I…I want to tell you something.”

“Anything. You can tell me anything, Adam.” Kris stoked his face lovingly, wishing he could erase his fear.

“Remember Halloween night, when I got drunk and…you took me to your house?”

“I sure do,” he said, keeping his voice low and soothing.

“That night, I had a nightmare, a really bad one. I…” Adam cringed and turned his head away, speaking into the pillow. “I dreamt that I saw you as an angel, flying away and telling me that you couldn’t be with me because I’m…I’m a damaged freak. And I ran and ran after you and begged you not to go…but you flew away from me….you left me.” Adam began to sniffle and pushed his face further into his pillow.

Kris was stunned and horrified. He knew somehow that this must have been tormenting Adam ever since Halloween. “Oh my sweet little wolf cub,” he said, turning Adam’s tear stained face up and kissing his eyelids, “I have never thought that about you, never my love, and I’m not going anywhere.” Suddenly, Kris understood that there was more to the pet name ‘angel’ than just a Halloween costume.

Adam choked back a sob and shook his head. “It’s me saying those things to myself, I know that now. I just get so scared and you’re so good, so beautiful…an angel…I feel like I don’t deserve you, like you’re going to wake up one day and realize that you don’t want to be with someone like me.”

Kris felt the tears rolling down his cheeks and hugged Adam fiercely. “Nothing could be farther from the truth,” he whispered. “Listen to me. Right after our first night together, when you asked me to leave your apartment…” Adam began to weep harder at these words. “No, Adam listen…I still wanted you. Every day for two weeks I tried to convince myself to move on, but I couldn’t…I couldn’t get you out of my mind. Don’t you remember how I said that I was planning to come find you? You just beat me to it. Adam…” Kris gazed into his eyes and spoke softly, deliberately. “Everything that has happened since that day has only made me love you more. You are so brave, such a loving and kind and strong person. You make me want to be a better man.”
“R-really?” Adam asked with quivering lips.

“Yes, really.”

“But all those things I’ve done to men.” He sniffed a few times and rubbed at his eyes.

“Have you ever hurt them? Ever done anything to them that they didn’t ask for?”

“No, but I treated them like objects, like a drug.”

“Because you were in pain, baby.” Kris stared into Adam’s eyes, willing him to see that he wasn’t a bad person, that he was worthy of love from an ‘angel.’

“I want to believe you.” Adam said quietly. He sat up and grabbed some Kleenex from the bedside table and blew his nose. “It’s so hard. I get so tired of feeling this way that sometimes I think it would be easier to go back to the way that I used to live, but I can’t and I don’t really want to. I want to be with you, only you. And…I wouldn’t want to be like that anyway, not anymore.”

Hearing Adam say that made Kris’ heart leap. He wants to get better for himself? He smiled and stroked Adam’s wet face. “See that? See what an incredible person you are?”

“It’s because you’re helping me,” said Adam sadly.

“We’re helping each other. Do you know how much I’ve changed since I met you?” He pulled Adam back down and snuggled him. “We are meant to be together.”

“So…so you will move in with me? Eventually?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Okay, Kris?”

“Hmm?”

“I want to tell you something else.”

“What, baby?”

“I want to tell you…about what happened to me.”

Chapter 28

“I want to tell you…about what happened to me.”

Somehow it felt right in this moment. Adam couldn’t explain why it did, not even to himself. It was just a feeling in his heart that it was time to share it, to tell the whole story for the first time. Kris was staring at him. Will he be able to handle it? Will I?

“You do? Adam, I mean…I’m incredibly touched that you trust me that much.” Kris blinked and a few tears squeezed out.
Adam sat up and gripped him by the shoulders, looking intensely into his eyes. “I’ve never told anyone before, ever. Everyone who knows just knew me at the time it happened. Kris, I don’t know what’s going to happen. I might not be able to get through it or I might have a flashback. Fuck, I might start breaking things again. I’m just warning you, okay?” His hands were trembling and his heart was racing, but he was certain it was the right thing to do. He wiped the wetness from his eyes and leveled a penetrating stare at Kris. *He has to know how big this is…he has to.*

Kris met his gaze steadily and nodded. “You’re so brave…I’ll try to be brave too. I’m ready for anything and we have your crisis plan just in case.”

*So incredible.* He launched at Kris and kissed him fiercely, devouring his lips as if they were fuel for what he was about to do. When Adam had had his fill, he drew back. “Okay…okay…” he said shakily. “I’m not going to be able to look at you. I just need you to hold me tight, angel.” He lay back down in the bed on his side and faced the window. *Ironic that there’s a fucking storm outside right now.* The thunder was still cracking loudly and Adam saw a few bolts of lightning that looked like they almost touched the ground. He felt tiny, like a little boy about to reveal a big, scary secret. *Where do I even start? At the beginning.*

Kris wrapped his arms around Adam’s and whispered in his ear, “I love you, my courageous man.”

Adam swallowed thickly and held onto Kris’ arms, trying to focus on the warmth and love flowing from his angel. He took a deep breath and cast his mind back to the past, something he usually avoided doing on purpose. “I used to love theater,” he began. “When I was in middle school, I wanted to grow up to be a Broadway star. I was really good at it, too. I got good roles in the community theater and in school plays and my parents signed me up for voice lessons.” A variety of images flashed through his mind, bright costumes and the cheering audiences that made his heart swell with pride. “I remember when I was Peter Pan and I was so excited to fly…” he reminisced with a far off voice, almost forgetting what the point of the story was, what it was leading up to.

Kris chuckled quietly and nuzzled Adam’s neck. “You were probably so adorable, I can just see it.”

He arched into Kris, snuggling back even further and tried to refocus. “Of course I was going to do theater in high school, and it was fun. We had talented students so there were a lot of good productions. I got to star in tons of plays and musicals and so did…Sam,” he said in a cracked voice. “I had the biggest crush on him, even since freshman year when we met in drama class.” Adam was silent for a moment, remembering the fresh-faced boy he had fawned over for years, never imagining that one so sweet would be capable of doing something so hideous. “He…he was so nice to me…I could tell he liked me, too, but neither of us had come out yet and…well he had a really hard time with it. I don’t think his family was very supportive.”

“I bet your family was amazing about it.”

“They really were…I was lucky. Sam came out a year after I did and I was thrilled because it meant we could finally be together.” A deep sadness swept over Adam at the memory of Sam asking him out at last, but he shook it off and continued. It was odd, now that he was finally telling the story it was just flowing from him, like someone had punctured the base of a balloon and all the air was steadily seeping out. “We took it really slow, because Sam was nervous and still a little unsure I think…and he got a lot of crap from some of his friends. And then, early in my senior year he wanted to have sex. And we did, and it was amazing and awkward and…I was really close to being in love with him.” Adam’s throat tightened and his eyes began to water. “But he got scared after that, wanted to slow it down again and I was so nice to him about it, so patient…so stupid,” he choked out.

Kris squeezed him and peppered the back of his neck with kisses. “You weren’t stupid, Adam.
You’re just naturally kind and supportive. It’s one of the things I love about you the most.”

“I… I didn’t know,” Adam sniffled, “I mean he was still really sweet to me and then…” He took a moment to pull himself together. “We needed more people for the chorus in our musical, my last big show before graduation, Romeo and Harriet.”

“What? Don’t you mean Romeo and Juliet?”

“Nope. It was a spoof, completely outrageous,” he said with the tiniest of smiles. “Anyway, Sam volunteered to do some recruiting and he managed to persuade a bunch of guys from his baseball team to do it. Of course, that’s not why they ended up joining, but they were obviously good enough actors…they fooled me.” The lump in his throat was painful now and he grasped Kris’ arms, trying to melt into him. “They were my friends. We hung out together all the time, and even though they were straight, they seemed to respect me and Sam. I trusted them. I trusted Sam.”

God, can I really do this? Am I going be able to finish? Just remember that you are safe. They can’t hurt you anymore. Sam is dead and the rest are in jail until they die. Kris is here…your angel is here. “The show was a hit, and we went out to party with everyone. I got a little stoned. And then Sam…he….” Adam started to shake and Kris stroked his hair soothingly.

“It’s okay, you can stop if you want to…it’s all right, my love.”

“No…n-no, I can do this.” He took a wavering breath and continued. “Sam wanted to celebrate with me alone. He took me to this private beach and it was so beautiful, so quiet. We made out on the sand…and then… I couldn’t believe it, he wanted to have sex. He said he was ready again and I… I was so happy. I thought we were falling in love.” Adam began to weep bitterly. He turned over and buried his face into Kris’ neck, his chest heaving with huge wracking sobs. It had been so long since Adam had thought in detail about this part of the story and the intense loss he had felt after four years of devotion to Sam. For almost a year after his trauma he’d been convinced that it wasn’t true, that it hadn’t been Sam’s idea…that somehow the others had made him do it.

“There now…oh my sweet Adam, it’s okay…shhhhh, angel is here, I’ve got you…I’ve got you,” murmured Kris, sniffing and stroking Adam’s head. On and on Adam cried open-mouthed against Kris’ body, choking and sobbing out his pain.

It was nearly ten minutes before his wails died down. He sat up, his face red and swollen and wet with tears and snot. Coughing through the fluids, he pulled out fistfuls of Kleenex and tried to clean himself up. “I haven’t cried like that in a long time.” Shame and relief attempted to war with each other, but he was too tired to fight and just collapsed onto his back, feeling numb. Kris propped himself up on one elbow and rubbed Adam’s chest soothingly. Without hesitation Adam continued his story in a monotone voice.

“We had sex, but he wanted to be on top this time and it was…wrong. It was my first time like that and it hurt, but…it felt…mean. And then he stopped right in the middle and whistled really loud.” Adam shuddered and was suddenly nauseous. He looked at Kris and saw that his eyes were wide and already horrified even though he kept moving his hand gently over Adam’s chest. Don’t look, it’ll make it worse. Returning his gaze to the ceiling, he drew long, deep breaths into his lungs and concentrated on the feeling of Kris’ warm hand until the bile in his throat retreated.

“And Sam pulled up his pants and left me on the ground. I didn’t know what was happening. I got up and barely managed to get dressed when… they came out of nowhere, like some kind of movie, all seven of them… my friends…” Loud screams began to tear through Adam’s head, his own voice, begging for them to stop, pleading with Sam. He lay there, quaking and staring blankly as his vision began to swirl with images.
“Adam,” Kris said firmly. “Look at me, baby…look at me.” He shifted so that he was hovering over Adam and gazed into his unseeing eyes. “Hey, you’re okay…I’m right here…I love you, Adam…I love you…look at me…”

Big, beautiful brown eyes suddenly floated into view, erasing all the sounds and pictures. “Kris?”

“Yes, baby, I’m here,” Kris said, relief evident in his voice. He gathered Adam up in a tight hug. “We should stop this now…you were almost gone there. Oh god, my beautiful Adam, you don’t have to do this. Please, I can’t stand to see you hurting so much,” he said with a small sob.

“No!” I’m not going to let them win this time…I won’t! “I have to do this, Kris…just help me do it…please?” His angry voice became softer as he considered his angel’s pained face. I don’t want to hurt him, but I have to get it out. He knew it was true. Now that he was almost done, the need to finish could not be denied.

Kris closed his eyes briefly and when he opened them, Adam saw a steely determination there. “Of course I’ll help, but can I hold you?”

We can’t look at each other, that’s how it will have to be. “Yes.” They spooned again only this time, Kris enveloped Adam as much as possible with his arms and legs and pressed his face into Adam’s neck. The storm continued to rage outside.

Okay, I’m nearly there…I can do it. “They jumped on me…and…at first it was just kicking and punching but then…they tore off my clothes and…” I can’t say it. “…they…they…” Adam’s breath was coming in short gasps now and he fought to push out the words. “…they raped me…they took turns while Sam held me down and he yelled at me…’Did you think I loved you, you fat, ugly faggot! I’m not gay, you hear me? I’m not gay! Such a stupid fucking queer!’ and things like that…he screamed and laughed like a crazy person in my ear the whole time and then I…I couldn’t breathe…they choked me with their…”

Adam was trembling violently, every single muscle tense and quaking and Kris…Kris’ entire body was shaking with silent sobs. Adam felt hot tears on the back of his neck as he spewed the last bit of the story from his gut. “They beat me so badly, Sam, too…I think some of them had steel toed boots on…I thought I was going to die…I…remember praying for death at one point,” he said so quietly that he wasn’t sure if Kris could hear him. “Then I lost consciousness and when I woke up, I was in a hospital.”

After he finished speaking, the only sounds were those of rain spattering the window, of Kris trying to hold back his crying and Adam’s shallow breathing. “I…I couldn’t sing for a really long time.”

These words seemed to break Kris’ self control. “Oh m-my g-god…oh m-my…” Kris sobbed, weeping unrestrainedly into Adam’s back. “I’m s-so sorry…”

Adam had no comfort to offer Kris. He just lay there, shivering and empty, but more…clean somehow. I did it. I really did it, and I’m…going to be okay. A flash of lightening suddenly cast the room in bright light. Adam closed his eyes against the harsh glare and heard Kris snuffle and eventually grow quiet.

“Adam,” Kris finally croaked, “how did you get to the hospital?”

“The police. Apparently we were trespassing on the beach and they came to investigate. They saved my life.” He was just parroting what he’d been told by others, and his voice was devoid of emotion because there was none left. “They called for back up and an ambulance.”
“And how on earth did Sam get off so easy? Why wasn’t he sentenced for life?”

“Lots of money and a fucking good lawyer. He was eighteen and I was seventeen…he got a statutory rape charge and assault.”

“What? But he almost killed you and…and…”

“I know, Kris…I know.”

Adam was exhausted and out of words, out of feelings. So, it seemed, was Kris. They lay there silently and listened to the rain until they fell asleep.

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A beautiful angel with soft brown hair curled his red wings around Adam. “I love you, my brave, strong, gorgeous man. I’m not going to leave you.” Adam sighed in his sleep and cuddled deeper into Kris’ arms.

***

The storm finally broke in the middle of the night and by morning the sun was shining brightly. Adam felt something tickling his face. Soft. His eyes fluttered open and he discovered that he was face to face with Kris, who was withdrawing his finger. “Sorry, baby, didn’t mean to wake you,” he whispered.

“It’s okay,” said Adam quietly.

They gazed at each other, their bodies a mere foot apart. Kris’ eyes were puffy and Adam was sure his looked the same, but he didn’t care. He lost himself in those deep brown pools, remembering his dream and feeling safer than he ever imagined it was possible to be with another man. It felt kind of scary, being this exposed and open with someone. He knows everything about me now. Looking intensely at Kris, Adam tried to decipher if there was any fear or doubt. No. Nothing but love.

“Let me make love to you, angel.”

Kris smiled and opened his arms.

Chapter 29

The sun shone brightly into the bedroom window revealing two men lying face-to-face, one asleep, the other awake and gazing at the sleeping man’s form. Kris had been up for about an hour processing his thoughts and feelings while trying to absorb the peacefulness on Adam’s face.
Last night, he had felt as if all of his insides had been scooped out, beaten to a pulp, twisted, and put back in haphazardly. Although Alisan had told him the basics, never did he imagine the degree of cruelty, manipulation and betrayal that Sam and his cronies had wreaked upon Adam. It shocked and disgusted him that human beings were capable of such vile behavior, and he had been close to throwing up a few times amidst his tears while listening to the story. Swirled into the mix was a fierce rage at them all, those rotten creatures who had tried to break Adam. Kris thought that death was too kind a punishment for someone like Sam.

But above all, he hurt for Adam, that sweet, innocent boy whose only desire was love. It killed him to think about the amount of pain and suffering, both physical and emotional, that Adam had endured. Kris had tried so hard to keep it together, to be strong for his love, but in the end he hadn’t been able to contain his sorrow.

He sighed quietly and ghosted his fingers over the freckles on Adam’s cheek. *I feel like I understand him so much better now.* Adam’s neediness, his lack of male friends, his sexual domination over men, and his difficulty with trust…it all makes even more sense. *I can’t believe he trusts me so much, and in such a short amount of time. Somehow he must have been ready for this, even if he didn’t realize it.* Kris was still deeply moved and humbled by the courage Adam had displayed last night. *If such a horrible thing had happened to me, would I have been able to handle it as bravely as he has?* Reflecting on that made Kris feel like he had no reason except cowardice for not standing up to his family. *That’s not a good reason.*

The desire to touch Adam was quickly becoming unbearable. *God, I love him so much.* He trailed a finger ever so gently across Adam’s beautiful face and couldn’t help but melt a little when he opened those breathtaking eyes of his, even if they were a little puffy from all the crying last night. “Sorry, baby, didn’t mean to wake you,” he whispered.

“It’s okay,” said Adam quietly.

They gazed at each other, their bodies a mere foot apart. *I wonder if it’s strange for him now that I know everything.* He looked for signs of fear or doubt, but all he saw in Adam’s eyes was love and contentment.

“Let me make love to you, angel.” Kris smiled and opened his arms.

Adam crawled on top of him and brushed his lips with a light kiss. “Morning breath,” he smirked.

“I don’t care,” said Kris. “What I care about is that we fell asleep in our pajamas and that I can’t feel your skin against mine right now.”

“We need to take care of that,” Adam said, caressing Kris’ face with the side of his palm.

But neither of them moved, both content to revel in their newfound closeness for the moment. “I love you,” Kris whispered.

“I love you, too.” He cupped Kris’ face with both hands and kissed his lips tenderly, then began to suck on his ear. “I want you,” he breathed.

Kris shuddered and arched his body up. “I’m yours.” *I really am, totally and completely.*

Adam bit his earlobe softly and mouthed his neck. “My angel,” he said into Kris’ skin, “…want to know every inch of you.” He slid his hands underneath Kris’ t-shirt, pushed it up, and ducked down to lick a wet path from navel to nipple.

A minute later Kris was naked and writhing under Adam’s hands and mouth exploring him
everywhere with nips and licks, soft caresses and fondling fingers. The back of his knee, the hollow of his collarbone and the sensitive skin of his inner thigh - none were safe from Adam’s heavenly torture. “Baby…I need you,” Kris whined.

Adam was busy swirling large wet circles into the flesh of Kris’ hip. “Mmmmm.” He continued to work his tongue, lapping at skin and sliding all the way up Kris’ body, diving in at last to lick the roof of his mouth, suck on his tongue and nibble at his lips. Suddenly Kris felt a wet drop on his cheek and looked up to see tears glistening in Adam’s eyes. “Hey now, what’s wrong?” he asked, catching a tear with his thumb.

“Nothing…everything is right. Everything is right.” He kissed Kris on the corner of the mouth and sniffed. “I feel like…myself. I mean, I don’t even know who that is anymore, but whoever I am…you love me. God, I’m not making any sense.”

“Yes you are.” Kris reached up and tucked a stray hair behind Adam’s ear. “It’s called unconditional love, something we all crave but so few of us get to experience. Feels good, doesn’t it?” he smiled.

“Yeah,” Adam replied softly. “Can you feel that from me, too?”

“I can, baby…I do.” He wrapped his arms and legs around Adam and whispered into his ear, “Make love to me, my sweet wolf…I want to feel you deep inside of me.”

They kissed again, licking tongues and mouths, their bodies pressed so closely together that all Kris could feel was heat and skin, not sure where he stopped and Adam began. He massaged his fingertips into Adam’s curving backside and felt warm wetness begin to slick their stomachs. Adam reached over to the bedside table and rummaged through the drawer until he found a condom and lube. Hovering over Kris, he sucked a new mark at the base of his neck then reached down to rub circles around and around his entrance.

Kris moaned and spread his legs wide, drawing in a sharp breath when he felt two fingers slip in….in and out…in and out…curling up, sending sparks of pleasure throughout his body while Adam murmured into his mouth, “love you, angel, love you…” as they shared air, panting and moaning breaths back and forth.

“Please,” Kris begged against his lover’s lips.

“Feel me,” Adam whispered, pushing his entire length into Kris’ waiting, trembling body until he was flush against him.

“Ohhhhh…” It was half sigh, half groan. As Adam drew back and slid in again, Kris squeezed his eyes shut in pleasure, feeling like he was being caressed on the inside. He opened his legs as far as he could and pulled Adam to his chest, kneading his back and getting lost in the ecstasy of the unhurried, steady rhythm. Stroke, stroke, stroke…and then…why did he stop?

“God…oh angellllll…”

Kris looked up and caught his breath. So beautiful. Eyes closed and head thrown back, Adam looked like a glowing god bathed in sunlight. I can see brown in his hair and even…is that ginger? Adam’s face was the picture of rapture and Kris thought that his heart might explode right then with love for this man. He’s the angel here.

All at once Adam shuddered, breaking the spell, and began thrusting with more vigor. “Feel me, Kris…feel it…so deep…s-so good…”

Kris felt it in every fiber of his being and hungered for more, eagerly welcoming the flesh pumping
in and out of his body, moaning and drowning in the smell of Adam, the touch of Adam, the love of Adam… Adam Adam Adam… permeating their private world.

“Ohhhhh…oh baby…oh…oh…”

*He’s close.*

They locked eyes. Suddenly Adam pulled out and snapped off the condom, drawing a loud gasp and a whine from Kris, but it quickly turned into a shout of pleasure when he felt fingers around him, stroking them both together…hot, slick skin…again and again… Another minute and Adam was gone, arching his entire body back, his long neck curved, straining and glistening as he cried out his release. The sight sent Kris right over the edge and he came, quivering from head to toe and sobbing his lover’s name. Their seed mixed and pooled on Kris’ belly and Adam collapsed onto it, still moaning in the aftershocks of his high.

“An…gel?” Adam panted.

“Yeah…baby?” Kris replied, his head still spinning with bliss.

“I love…you…so much.”

“Me…too.” It took several minutes before Kris’ heart rate was back to normal.

Adam finally rolled off of him and spooned his back. “What do you want to do today?” he asked, nuzzling Kris’ neck.

“Hmmmm.” The first thought in his mind was watching the football game that he and Matt had been talking about the other day, Arizona at USC, but he was fairly certain that it would not be high on Adam’s list of fun things to do. *But I really want to see it. Maybe we could watch just a little.* Here again was one of those tricky spots for Kris, asking for something he knew the other person didn’t exactly enjoy. *Time to practice something new.* “Well…I was kind of hoping to catch a little, um…football?” he asked nervously.

Adam chuckled. “You’re serious, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I mean, I’ve been really looking forward to it. The Trojans beat UCLA last weekend and I want to see them get stomped.”

“Trojans? You mean like the condoms?”

“No, silly,” Kris laughed, “like the warriors. They haven’t lost to Arizona since 2000, but I just know they are going to get their asses kicked this time,” he said eagerly.

“Awww, you are so cute, my little rabbit. Why not? I do make a mean guacamole dip, but we’ll have to go to the store first. What time is the game on?”

“One-thirty. Thanks, Adam. I mean, I know you don’t like it and all, but…”

“Hey, you’re allowed to say what you want. Besides, anything that makes you this excited has to be all right.”

*That wasn’t so bad. I can do this.* “Well let’s get up then! We have to shower and go shopping and…”

“Oh my god, I think I’m going to enjoy watching you much more than the game!” Adam giggled.
“Come on, make out session in the shower?”

“Hell yeah!”

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Grocery shopping with Adam for game snacks was a trip. Whereas Kris would have grabbed a few bags of chips and some beer, Adam made a whole production out of it, and by the time they were finished it looked as if they were about to host ten people. “You know it’s just the two of us, right?” Kris said as they loaded the bags into Adam’s car.

“Well, I want to have options, and since this is my first time ever watching football, I want to do it up right,” he said, grinning. “Plus, if I get bored, I can always cook.”

Kris shut the back door of the car and grabbed Adam’s hand, pulling him in close. “Baby, I promise that if you get bored there will be much more interesting things to do than cook,” he said with a seductive leer.

“Mmmm, I like the sound of that. Damn, the amount of testosterone in my apartment is going to be off the charts, today,” he laughed. “Football, sex…now all we need is to start opening beer bottles with our teeth.”

Kris gave up the pre-game show in favor of helping Adam prepare snacks, mostly because it was so much fun trying to distract him, but he left the TV on in the background so he could hear some of the commentary.

“Kris,” Adam said with feigned annoyance, “how am I supposed to finish my guacamole with your hands all over me?” He put down the knife and turned around.

“You know how sexy you look in these tight jeans, baby, I can’t help myself,” Kris said as he invaded Adam’s personal space.

Ten minutes before kickoff, Kris and Adam sat down on the couch. Adam’s coffee table was loaded up with an amazing variety of snacks, and Kris couldn’t help but think how jealous Matt would be if he saw it. He frowned a little, hoping that his roommate had found other friends to watch the game with. It would be so cool if Adam could hang out at my place one of these days. I just know that he and Matt would hit it off. Kris barely saw Matt anymore and if he were being honest with himself, he missed his best friend quite a bit.

“Kris? You okay?”

“Mm-hmm. Just thinking.”

“What about? You look, I don’t know, upset or something.”

“Nah.” Kris snuggled up to Adam. “I was just thinking about Matt. I kind of miss him, you know. We used to hang out a lot.”

“I think I know how you feel,” Adam said quietly.

“You do?” Kris found that surprising given how much Adam seemed to need him.
“Well, yeah. I’ve been thinking the same thing about Ali. It’s been ages since I’ve seen her.”

They looked at each other for a moment. Kris wasn’t sure what to say. He felt conflicted, part of him wanting to ask for more time to be with Matt, another part worried about upsetting Adam, and yet another not wanting to give up a single moment with him.

“It’s weird,” said Adam. “It’s like, I want to be with you all the time, but I do miss her a lot. And it might be fun for all three of us to hang out together sometime.” He put an arm around Kris and kissed the top of his head. “Do you know what I mean?”

“Completely. I was thinking exactly the same thing, but about Matt.” Kris felt Adam tense a little at that. He doesn’t socialize with guys. “But it would be awesome to spend time with Ali, she’s such a cool girl.”

“Kris, you know that I don’t…I mean, I want to know the people that important in your life. I really do, it’s just…”

Just hearing Adam say that made him feel a whole lot better. He wants to meet Matt. He’ll get there.

“Hey, don’t worry, we’re going to take things at your pace, okay? Maybe we can set something up with Ali before we head out to Arkansas. I’ve got my final exam on Monday, but after that I’m totally free in the evenings until we fly out.”

Adam hugged him tightly. “You are so amazing, so patient with me. I’m so lucky.” He lifted Kris’ chin up to kiss him, but just then the start of the game was announced and Kris turned his head, causing Adam to miss and kiss the air.

“It’s kickoff time!”

“Damn, blocked by TV? No fair,” Adam chuckled good-naturedly. “So, how does this game work?”

Eyes glued to the set, Kris launched in to the basics of football, stopping every once in a while to whoop or groan at the plays.

“Wait, wait, wait…I’m totally lost,” said Adam. “But it doesn’t matter, they just have to get the ball to the other side, right?”

“Pretty much.”

“Okay, that’s good enough for me.” He picked up a handful of corn chips and settled back to watch.

“Hah! I knew it! You bastards are going to pay!” yelled Kris when Arizona scored, pumping his fist in the air.

“Shit, you are totally hot like this, angel. I could definitely get used to football.”

Kris laughed, his eyes sparkling with glee and he turned around to plant a wet kiss on Adam’s lips. “Just wait until half time, then you’ll really feel my excitement,” he promised.

“Can’t wait. How long will we have?”

“Half an hour.”

“Really? Fuck, we can do so much in that amount of time!”

“I know. Maybe we can even do it twi-- oh my god! Did you see that? Penalty! Automatic fist down! Ahahahaaa…Yes!”
USC was getting slammed by Arizona and Kris was on his feet, adrenaline pumping through his body as he watched them score again just before the half ended. Even Adam got caught up in the enthusiasm and stood up, clapping and grinning at Kris. “It’s much more complicated than I thought, this game, the players really have to --”

But he was cut off when Kris practically knocked him over with kiss so fierce that it took Adam’s breath away. “Goddamn!” he exclaimed after Kris finally drew back. “I fucking love football!” He tackled Kris to the floor and they rolled around, almost wrestling as they tore each other’s clothes off. Finally Adam pinned Kris and straddled him, both of them naked and sweaty from their efforts. Kris had the desperate urge to turn the tables on Adam. He felt so powerful right now, but he knew it would be a mistake to be that aggressive. Adam seemed to sense it, however.

“You look like you want to ravage me.”

The fire in Kris’ eyes grew even more intense. He couldn’t help it. He nodded. Without another word Adam got up, hurried to his bedroom and returned with supplies. Kris lay on the floor, burning with so much need that he began to stroke himself, imagining Adam beneath him spread out and moaning.

“Leave that to me.” Adam said, lying down on his back next to Kris. “Get on up here. I know you want to.”

Kris almost sobbed in relief and scrambled up onto Adam, holding him down with his thighs and kissing him hungrily. He reached down and pulled apart his cheeks, closed them around Adam’s cock and began jerking his hips forward.

“Fuck, yes!” Adam cried.

Faster and faster he rocked, clenching around Adam’s dick until the need to have it inside of him grew intolerable. He slid down a little and snatched up the condom. “Let me…”

“Do it. Come on, baby…put it on me and ride the fuck out of my cock.” Hearing those words come out of Adam’s mouth made Kris dizzy with lust. His hands trembled and he fumbled with the packet until frustration won out and he tore it open with his teeth.

“So hot, so fucking sexy,” panted Adam, staring at Kris with searing heat in his eyes.

Kris growled. He rolled the condom onto Adam’s pulsing, leaking dick and lubed it up. Without hesitation he lifted up, spread his ass cheeks wide and slammed down, impaling himself in one stroke. “Shit!” he yelled.

“Yes! God fucking damnit, Kris…take me!”

The words drove him crazy, made him feel like he was fucking Adam. He clenched his ass muscles and thrust his hips up and down, forward and backward, then in circles, drawing the most delicious sounds from Adam. He felt like a wild animal, determined to make Adam scream and beg, just a little. “You want it harder, baby, do you?” he said, but not too aggressively.

“Yes! Give it to me!”

Kris deliberately slowed down and licked across Adam’s mouth. “Ask me again.”

“Please…ride me! Take me!”

That was enough for Kris. Faster and faster he rode, grunting with every stroke, his hands pressed
into Adam’s shoulders, holding him down and making him cry out with pleasure. “Jerk me off, lover, I want your hand around my cock.”

Adam spit into his hand, grabbed Kris roughly and pulled on his dick over and over again. “Yes... yessssss, oh god, Adam...”

Adam fucking Kris fucking Adam. Sweat trickled down the small of Kris’ back as he sped up, thrusting wildly now. Their moans and cries grew louder and louder, their bodies tensed for release.

“Oh...oh...OH! Fuck! Kris! Yesss!

“Adam!” Kris aimed his dick and Adam opened his mouth just in time to catch the cum, some of it landing on his face. “Holy fuck! Damn...that is...HOT,” exclaimed Kris through his heavy breathing.

Adam sputtered a little and licked his lips, then stuck out his long tongue and tried to lap up the rest from his face.

“Allow me to help.” Kris grasped Adam’s face and licked him clean with long swipes over his mouth, cheeks and chin.

“Fucking hot,” moaned Adam.

“Alright folks, second half of the game coming right up!” said the announcer.

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“Wooohoooo! Take that Trojans! That’ll teach you!” Kris jumped up and down when the final seconds of the game ticked away, declaring the Arizona Wildcats the winners in a major upset over USC.

Adam chuckled sleepily from the couch and yawned. He had tried to keep up with Kris’ energy, but had found that he was no match for that kind of sports zeal. “I’m happy for you, angel.” It was nearly dinnertime when the game concluded, but neither of them were hungry due to all the snacking. “Do you hear something? Oh, hey! That must be Ali calling...that’s her ringtone.”

He got up to answer the phone and Kris stretched out on the couch feeling victorious in more ways than one. *I watched football with Adam. I said what I wanted and it worked. And the sex! Shit, that was amazing.* Adam had shown a tremendous amount of vulnerability and trust in those moments, letting Kris be dominant like that. Kris felt brave, enough to tackle something else that had been weighing on his mind. “I’m going to call my mom!” he yelled to Adam who was chatting on the phone in the kitchen.

“Okay!” came Adam’s response.

He walked into the bedroom and dug into his bag for his phone. Sitting on the edge of the bed, Kris looked at the little plastic device like it was an enemy to be conquered. He took a deep breath and dialed the number. It rang a few times.

“Hello?”

“Hey, ma.”
“Kris! What a pleasant surprise, honey. How are you?”

“Really good. Listen, I want to tell you something,” he said seriously.

“What is it?” she asked with a note of concern. “Is everything all right?”

“Yeah. Ma, I’m in love.”

“Honey that’s wonderful! Is it Adam?”

“It is. I love him so much.”

“Oh Kris, I’m so happy for you.”

Kris ran a shaky hand through his hair. “I’m bringing him home for Christmas.” Silence met his ear. “Ma? Did you hear me?” Of course she did. Crap.

“Yes, but…are you sure that’s such a good idea? I mean…” Her voice was definitely concerned now and it made Kris cringe. He knew she was thinking about what the others would say.

“Look. I don’t care what they think anymore. I’m sick and tired of pretending to be someone else. Why can’t you support me on that?”

“I…I…Kris, you know that I support you.”

“Only in private! What, are you ashamed of me, ma? Are you?”

“Of course not, honey! It’s just, well, your grandmother in particular…”

“I’m her grandson for Christ sake!”

“Kristopher! Watch your tongue!”

“I don’t care! What kind of Christian only loves someone under certain conditions? It’s not okay!” Kris said loudly.

“Honey, what’s come over you? This isn’t like you at all.”

“No, you know what, it is like me. I’ve just been too chicken to say it. Well not anymore. Either you accept me and Adam coming together or I’m not coming at all,” he fumed. Maybe it wasn’t fair to throw an ultimatum at her like that, but he was beyond caring. If she, the queen of people pleasing, couldn’t handle it then he’d stay here. He and Adam could find plenty to do with two weeks off.

“I’ll…be sure to put out extra towels,” she said quietly.

“Really? I can’t tell you how relieved I am. Look, I’m sorry for getting upset like that, but I just can’t do this anymore, okay? I know it’s going to be hard on you and everything, but…umm, are you going to tell them that Adam is coming?”

“I don’t know, Kris. I’ll figure it out.” She sounded sad.

Shit. I hate this! Guilt bubbled up, twisting his stomach and he almost took it all back. No. No, I can do this. It’s her problem now. She agreed and I have to leave it for her to work out. Maybe this will be good for her, too. You put her in a no-win situation though…was that really fair? Oh yeah? Was it fair for her to be an accomplice all these years? “Thanks. You’re going to love Adam. He’s an amazing cook and I’m sure he’ll be completely thrilled to help out in the kitchen.”
“He cooks?”

“Mmhmm, really well. The first time he made me dinner, he whipped up this incredible steak meal with some kind of wine mushroom sauce. And at Thanksgiving, he and his mom pretty much did everything. He’s sooo amazing,” Kris sighed.

“He sounds wonderful, honey. I…I’m sure it will all work out.”

Kris wasn’t sure about that all, but he was glad that she sounded less sad. He knew that once she met Adam, she would fall under his charming spell. How could anyone not? “Okay, I’m going to go now. Thanks, ma. I love you.”

“I love you, too. Me and your pop and Danny, we all love you.”

“I know. I’ll see you on the twentieth.” He hung up and looked at his lap.

“That was really brave, Kris.” Adam was leaning against the doorway with a soft smile playing on his lips.

Kris shrugged and flopped onto his back, feeling emotionally drained. He closed his eyes and tried to absorb the enormity of what he had just done. The bed sank a few inches and he opened his eyes to see Adam’s face inches from his own. “I’m so proud of you, angel,” he murmured.

“Yeah, I guess I am, too. But I have no idea what’s going to happen. Maybe they won’t come. Maybe they will and they’ll be rude to you. Oh my god, if my grandma starts preaching at us, I don’t think I’ll make it.”

“Listen to me. You and I have been through some pretty rough stuff so far. I know we can handle this,” Adam said, brushing his lips lightly across Kris’ forehead.

“You’re right, we can.” Even if they disown me, I’ve got my parents and Danny, and Adam and his family. Maybe Nana can adopt me as her grandson.

Adam took Kris by the chin and kissed him briefly. “Want to help me bake some cookies? I got chocolate chips at the store today.”

“Cookies for dinner? Excellent!”

Chapter 30

Motherfuckers. Sweat was pouring down Adam’s face and neck as he punched and kicked the 80lb bag in front of him repeatedly. The way he was tearing into it, anyone in the gym watching him would have thought he had a personal vendetta to settle with the punching bag. He’d been coming here almost every day for almost two weeks now and had hired a personal trainer, a woman named Ann, to show him how to do this properly so he didn’t hurt himself. The first time he’d almost broken a wrist after recklessly pummeling his fury into the tough leather. Goddamn assholes. With every blow he imagined their faces being bludgeoned the way his had been. Right, left, right, kick, kick…his biceps rippled and his black tank top was sopping wet and clinging to his chest and back. Beads of sweat dripped from his hair and fell onto the mat below. How does it feel, you spineless, worthless pieces of shit! Adam bounced on his toes and leveled a series of deadly shots that would have knocked a full grown man unconscious.
Ever since quitting his job, he had stopped the workouts that had been part of his pre-show routine, and if felt good to be in shape again. But more importantly than that, he now had a regular appointment with anger. Instead of random episodes of violence, Adam’s rage was structured and channeled into these sessions at the gym. Although he still had the occasional outburst, they were much less frequent. Most days he got up and came in at about ten, which meant that he missed the morning rush, and left before the lunch crowd arrived. He never talked to anyone except Ann. When Kris spent the night he and Adam came in to the fitness center together. Kris preferred weights and cardio, however, so they met up at eleven thirty, both drenched in sweat and went back to Adam’s apartment. Sometimes they made it to the shower before attacking each other.

Sadly, it was Thursday and Kris was at work. Adam checked his watch and saw that there were only ten minutes before the lunchers started arriving. He picked up his towel and scrubbed it through his hair before heading to the locker room where he stored his keys, wallet and sweatshirt but never used the shower. Being naked in a place that public was out of the question.

Later as he showered, Adam thought about the past week and smiled to himself, his hand automatically going to his dick when his sexy boyfriend’s face came to mind. He sighed and stroked himself lazily, remembering the last football game they’d watched together. Adam had learned some new and interesting terms like ‘tight end,’ a position played on the offense, which was highly amusing when joked about during foreplay. And Chanukah, what a fucking blast! Adam’s family only got together on the first day of the holiday as a tradition, and though his parents and some relatives continued to celebrate all eight nights, for Adam it was more about being with the people he loved. The jury was still out for him on what he really believed in religiously. Well whatever or whoever is out there, thanks for Kris. Never had holidays been more enjoyable now that he could share them with a boyfriend.

Tonight he was making dinner for Alisan and Kris, but there was plenty of time until then, so after showering and a quick lunch he decided to work on his new song. This one had an altogether different sound than the others on his demo, slow and moody as opposed to upbeat. It had started as an experiment in mid-November, a combination of how he used singing as therapy and something brand new. He grabbed a glass of water and sat down in his studio.

Don’t fly away angel

Fold up your wings

And fall into my arms

Heaven is here with me

Adam hadn’t sung it for anyone yet. In fact, he still wasn’t sure about putting it on the album. It’s so personal. But he couldn’t stop writing it, singing it; sometimes he even found himself humming the melody without noticing until Kris asked him what it was. “Just something I’m working on,” was all he ever said.

After several hours Adam leaned back in his chair and stretched his arms over his head. I should return those calls. He had a few employment leads to follow up on, one at a new club opening soon and another inviting him to audition for a part in a local musical. Theater was something that Adam never intended on getting back in to. There were too many bad memories connected to it, but it was only polite to decline the invitation rather than ignore it. The director was sorely disappointed by Adam’s decision and hoped that he would change his mind for the next production. Don’t count on it. The new club was promising, however, and he set up a date with the owner to visit and perform a few songs after Christmas. Time to get working on dinner.
By six o’clock everything was ready. The apartment was warm and smelled heavenly to Adam, a mixture of spices, garlic and Kris, whose scent now lingered everywhere due to how much time he spent at Adam’s. *I wonder what kind of dessert he’ll bring?* Kris had insisted on contributing something despite Adam’s reassurance that he didn’t have to bother. When a knock came on the door, he was hoping that it was Kris just so he could have a few minutes to kiss him without interruption before Alisan arrived.

“Angel!”

“Hey, gorgeous. Oh my god it smells amazing in here!” Kris’ stomach growled loudly and he chuckled. “Yeah, obviously I’m starving.” He put down the plastic bag he was holding and launched into Adam’s arms. “I missed you so much,” he said, nuzzling Adam’s neck.

“Me, too lover, now give me that sexy mouth of yours before Ali gets here.” Adam pushed him against the wall and kissed him until his lips were bright red.

“Damn, baby,” Kris panted.

“Been thinking about you all day.” He attacked him again, licking into his mouth and nibbling on those pouty lips. *So perfect, like they were made just for me.*

Kris moaned and squeezed Adam’s ass. Just as it looked like they were about to take the next step, someone, almost certainly Alisan, knocked on the door. “Mmph. Adam, the door…”

Adam sighed and released Kris. “Oh alright.”

“What the hell?” exclaimed Alisan when she came into the apartment. “Jesus, it reeks of sex in here! Do you guys just go at it all the time or something?”

The men sniffed the air and shrugged. “Smells good to me,” said Adam.

“Me, too,” agreed Kris.

Alisan laughed loudly. “You two…unbelievable. Well I’m going into the kitchen then because that smells like an Italian restaurant. Yum! What did you make, puppy?”

“Homemade shrimp ravioli with tomato vodka cream sauce,” Adam answered like he was reading from a cookbook.

“Wow! That sounds amazing!” Kris picked up his plastic bag and followed Adam and Alisan into the kitchen.

“Vodka, huh?” smirked Alisan. “Trying to get us drunk?”

“Haha. It’s just for the flavor, the alcohol gets cooked out of it.”

“Awww, bummer!” she giggled. “Well don’t worry, I brought wine. Kris, what’s in the bag?”

Kris looked sheepishly at them. “It’s just something I picked up,” he said, scratching the back of his neck.

*He is too adorable for words.* Adam peeked in the bag and let out a squeal of excitement. “You didn’t! Oh my god, angel, French silk pie?” he said gleefully. “How did you know?”

Kris looked relieved and pleased with himself. “Well I figured it wasn’t that big a stretch from the ice
cream that you love.”

“Mmmm, I promise to thank you properly for that later,” he said with a wink. “Now, who’s hungry?”

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“And then Matt says in this totally serious voice, ‘sorry ma’am, but we’re fresh out of pink polka dot dress suits,’ and the lady, she actually hit him on the head with her purse! Can you believe that?” Kris snorted and rolled his eyes. “I tell you, the retail business is dangerous, especially this time of year.”

Adam and Alisan laughed around mouthfuls of ravioli. “Shit, remind me to protect my head the next time I come to visit you at work,” chuckled Adam.

“No, you’re not allowed anymore…you are way too distracting. It’s really lucky that I didn’t get caught messing around last time,” Kris said, grinning.

“Oh my god, what happened?” Alisan asked Adam.

“I was only pretending to be a normal customer!” he said with his hands up in defense. “So what if I needed help trying on some pants in the fitting room?”

“Adam!” she laughed, “you are so bad!”

“He really is,” Kris said and then turned to Adam, “but I wouldn’t have you any other way.”

They smiled at each other fondly and leaned across the table to share a quick kiss.

“Aww, you guys are so cute,” Alisan sighed, “I hope I can find what you have someday.”

“What about that hot DJ? Whatever happened with him?” asked Adam, picking up a forkful of salad.

Alisan’s smile faded. “Well that didn’t turn out so great. He’s a good DJ but a sucky date. He wouldn’t stop talking about himself all night long.”

Kris frowned. “You deserve much better than that.”

“Thank you, Kris. Damn, why do you have to be gay?” she pouted.

“Hey now, back off of my man,” said Adam, punching her playfully on the arm. He got up and started clearing the plates.

“Puppy, that was so incredible. I know I’ve told you this a thousand times before, but you really have a gift.”

“Aww, thanks.”

“She’s right, I’ve never had food like this except in a restaurant. And when you cook, it makes me…” Kris trailed off, looking embarrassed.

“What?” Adam walked up behind Kris and hugged his shoulders.
“It makes me feel special,” he murmured.

*Wow, I think I can actually feel my heart melting.* “You are special, angel,” Adam whispered into his ear. “I cook for you because I love you,” he said, giving Alisan a bright smile. “You too, Ali.”

She returned the smile and sighed a bit longingly. “So what’s the plan for the rest of the evening?”

“Oh I don’t know, I was thinking we could pop in a movie and…oh hey, that’s my phone, I’ll be right back.” He walked into the living room and picked up his phone. “Hello?”

“Um, hi Adam, it’s Brian,” came a quiet voice on the other line.

“Brian? Cousin Brian?” *Why is he calling me?*

“Uh yeah, sorry, I mean, I got your number from your mom. I hope it’s okay that I called.” Brian sounded flustered and uncertain.

“It’s fine. So, what’s up?”

“Actually, I was hoping that you could give me Kris’ number?” he asked with obvious nervousness.

*What? Why on earth would he want to talk to Kris? This is really weird.* Adam wasn’t sure what to do. The idea of Brian and Kris talking without him made him feel funny. “Uh, well he’s actually here if you want to talk to him.” *At least Kris can fill me in right away afterwards.*

“That would be really great!” said Brian enthusiastically.

“Okay, just let me get him. Hang on a sec.” *What is this all about?* He returned to the kitchen and held out the phone to Kris. “It’s for you.”

“Huh? Who’s calling for me here?”

“Remember my cousin Brian from Thanksgiving? Well, he wants to talk to you,” Adam said with a shrug, trying not to sound annoyed.

“Oh, okay,” replied Kris, looking just as confused as Adam felt. He took the phone and held it up to his ear. “Brian? It’s Kris. You wanted to talk to me?”

Adam frowned and sat down at the table next to Alisan.

“What does he want?” she asked quietly.

“No idea.” Adam crossed his arms and watched Kris.

“Oh!” said Kris, smiling. “Of course I would, for sure! That’s no problem, Brian.”

*Why is he smiling? What does Brian want with him?* This whole thing was very disconcerting, and Adam suddenly felt possessive of Kris. *But that doesn’t make any sense. Brian is my cousin and he’s just a kid! What the hell is wrong with me?*

Alisan seemed to note his troubled face and squeezed his arm reassuringly.

“Well, I’m out of town for two weeks,” continued Kris, “maybe we can hang out when I get back?”

*What? Hang out with my cousin? What the fuck is going on?*
“Uh-huh, wait a minute, let me get a piece of paper and I’ll write it down.” Kris shifted the phone to his other ear and looked up. “Can I borrow a pen and paper?”

Adam got up and pulled off a sticky note from the pad on the counter. He handed it and a pen to Kris with questioning eyes.

“It’s okay.” Kris whispered, “I’ll tell you about it when I’m done. Okay, Brian, I’m ready.”

“Puppy?”

“Hmph.”

“I’m sure it’s fine, whatever it is…don’t look so upset,” Alisan said, putting a hand on his shoulder.

Adam shrugged it off and continued to frown. Why do they have to hang out? What about me? Why am I not included?

“That sounds great. Yeah, I’ll call you when I get back, okay?” said Kris. “Sure, alright, bye.” He hung up and set the phone on the table. “Adam, it’s all right.” Kris ran a hand through his hair and sat down. “Apparently Brian is struggling and he needs someone to talk to.”

“What? What do you mean? Why you? He doesn’t even really know you. What’s he struggling with? Are you two going to hang out without me?”

“Baby, baby, slow down,” said Kris soothingly. “Listen, Brian is, well he thinks he might be gay.”

Adam’s jaw fell open. Whoa! Didn’t see that one coming. “But, but…” he stuttered.

“Aww, poor kid, he probably needs to talk to someone who isn’t family, is that right?” Alisan asked.

Kris nodded.

“But why? I mean he’d get loads of support from everyone in our family. Why does he want to talk to you? I would think he’d be more comfortable talking to someone he knows,” said Adam sulkily. You’re just upset because this will take more time away from being with Kris. So what if I am?

“Adam, think about it, he needs to talk to someone who isn’t emotionally involved, someone a little bit closer to his age who’s been through this before. Don’t you remember how that felt? Hell, I do.”

Adam sighed in resignation. “Yeah, I remember. It’s just…well, how much time are you going to spend with him?”

“Is that what’s bothering you?” Kris looked to Alisan for support.

“Why don’t I go and pick out a movie,” she offered. “Come and join me when you two are ready.”

“Thanks, Ali. Come on.” Kris pulled a grumbling Adam up by the hand and led him to the bedroom. As soon as they entered it, he gave Adam a great big hug and sat them down on the bed. “Hey, look at me.” Kris lifted up his chin and gazed into his eyes. “We’re going to have to work this out.”

Adam stared stonily at Kris. “You could have said no.”

“Are you serious? The kid needs help, I’m sure you can understand that.”

“He doesn’t need it from you. He could get it from anyone! Doesn’t he have friends he can talk to
that aren’t ‘emotionally involved’ as you put it?” he said sarcastically.

“Come on, that’s not fair. I don’t know why he picked me, but I’m not about to turn him away!” Kris said, raising his voice a little.

“Not fair? I’ll tell you what’s not fair!” Adam got up and started pacing the room. “I…I…” Well? What is it, Lambert? What’s not fair? Fuck. He pulled at his hair and clenched his jaw. “It’s hard enough sharing you with Matt,” he said tersely. “Harder than I thought it would be. I’m selfish, okay? I know you want to spend time with other people, I get that, and I want to hang out with Ali, too, it’s just…just…fuck! It’s hard!” He felt torn apart, too many emotions battling for attention. His neediness for Kris was almost scary sometimes and he knew it wasn’t healthy, he knew they would have to find a balance, but…

He looked at Kris and saw understanding in his eyes but also determination. He’s not going to back down from this Brian thing. Puffing out a long breath, Adam sat down on the bed again and put his face in his hands. Calm the fuck down for god’s sake. “Sometimes I still get scared,” he mumbled through his fingers, “like if we’re not together as much as possible then…”

“Then what?” Kris pulled Adam’s hands away from his face. “Listen, nothing is going to come between us, nothing and no one, you hear me? Even if for some reason we couldn’t see each other for a month, it wouldn’t change how I feel about you,” he said more softly.

“Don’t say that! Fuck, I don’t even want to think about how awful that would be. A month?” Adam shivered and clutched Kris to his chest.

“It was just an example, I’m sure that’s not going to happen.” Kris drew back and caressed Adam’s cheek. “I love you, baby. Remember that I’m not going anywhere, no matter what. We’re going to work this out together.”

Remember your new dream? It’s going to be okay. He took a deep breath and tried to quell his twisting stomach. “It’s going to be okay.”

Kris nodded. “It is. Now kiss me so we can finish our evening with Ali.”

Adam didn’t need telling twice. He practically leapt at Kris and pushed him down to the bed, crawling all over him and kissing him feverishly. Then he started grinding his hips steadily and sucked on Kris’ neck.

“Adam, baby, I promise…I swear…we’ll do this…after Ali leaves…oh god…”

Hearing Alisan’s name seemed to jolt Adam’s brain. She’s your best friend and you just left her out there. Come on, get a grip. He sat back up and shook his head. “Sorry, got carried away.”

Kris was breathing heavily and he had a raging hard on tenting up the front of his pants. “Shit,” he gasped. “Hold that thought, you sexy beast, and do it again later tonight. I guarantee I won’t stop you.”

Adam chuckled, feeling a whole lot better now. “Why don’t I give you a minute to ah, settle down,” he said as he strutted to the door. “Ali has seen me like this loads of times at clubs,” he smirked, “but that monster might be a bit of a shock to her.”

“So cruel,” Kris panted and stuck his tongue out.

“Don’t tempt me,” Adam winked and blew him a kiss. He went back into the living room and stopped dead. “Oh my god! What did you do?” he cried, horrorstruck. All of his meticulously
organized DVDs were jumbled messily on the floor in front of Alisan.

“It’s your punishment for being gone so long,” she said with a wicked gleam in her eyes. “Besides you know you’ll have fun reorganizing them…hey now, hey…oh no you don’t!” She sprang up from the floor just in time to avoid Adam’s tickle hands.

He chased her around and around until he caught her. “Haha! You are in so much trouble!” he crowed, giggling and tickling her mercilessly on the sofa.

“Ahhhh! No, no…help! Help!” she cackled, wriggling and trying to get away. “Kris! Kris! Save me!” she yelled when she spotted him.

Kris leaned over the back of the couch and licked a long, wet stripe right up the side of Adam’s neck. “Hey my sexy man,” he whispered seductively, blowing a hot breath into his ear.

Adam gasped and went stock still, long enough for Alisan to escape, and then groaned longingly. “You play dirty!” he scowled at Kris.

“Payback, my love,” Kris said smugly and patted him lightly on the cheek.

Alisan snickered. “Neener neener!”

“God, we’re like five year olds,” Adam laughed. “I take it you found a movie to watch as you were wreaking havoc on my collection?”

“So dramatic,” Alisan said, rolling her eyes. “I was up for comedy, so I picked My Big Fat Greek Wedding.”

“Oh, I love that one!” said Kris with a huge smile.

The three of them snuggled up together on the couch with Adam in the middle, his arms around Alisan and Kris on either side of him. “Ahhh, my two favorite people in the whole world.” He gave a kiss to each of them on the temple and stared the movie. This is good. I like being with them both at the same time. He felt warm and fuzzy inside, like the way a cheesy holiday special makes people feel when everyone hugs in the happy ending. He thought about Matt and sighed to himself. I’ll get there.

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“Oh my god,” Alisan groaned, holding her belly, “that movie will never get old! The part where she’s on the phone at the travel agency…I haven’t laughed that hard in a long time. My stomach hurts!”

“I know!” chortled Adam. He stretched and stood up. “Okay, who’s ready for dessert?” Kris and Alisan raised their hands like they were in a classroom. Adam went into the kitchen, sliced up the pie and dished out a piece for everyone. Afterward they decided to put in another movie.

By the middle of ‘The Nightmare Before Christmas,’ Alisan was curled up in a corner of the sofa, sleeping soundly. The two men had stopped paying attention to the TV about ten minutes ago. Kris was straddling Adam on the couch and they were making out quietly, hands in each other’s hair.
“Don’t you think we should wake her up so she can go home?” whispered Kris after a soft kiss.

“Probably,” said Adam and nipped at the back of Kris’ jaw, “but that would mean we have to stop.”

“Mmm, so true. Of course, then you could have your way with me. I seem to remember,” he began, arching his neck so Adam could bite it, “that you owe me a reward for the pie.”

Adam worried his teeth gently into the soft skin of Kris’ throat. Don’t want him to have to wear turtlenecks in Arkansas. “That I do, angel. Can’t argue with your logic.”

They got up reluctantly and Kris went to the kitchen to wrap up some leftovers for Alisan.

“Ali, it’s time to get up and go home.” Adam shook her gently.

She sat up, yawned and rubbed her eyes. “What time is it?”

“Close to midnight. Do you want a ride home?”

“Nah. Just let me wake up a bit.” After fifteen minutes Alisan was ready to go with a plastic container full of ravioli in her hand. “Thanks again,” she said, “have great time you two and call me when you get back.”

“Will do, Ali,” said Kris. “We should get together again, this was fun,” he smiled.

After she left, Adam wasted no time in fulfilling his promise to Kris. “The dishes can wait until tomorrow. Now, where were we?” he asked, cornering Kris in the kitchen.

“I believe you were manhandling me on your bed.” He hopped up into Adam’s arms and wrapped his legs around him. “You’re looking mighty buff these days, how about you show me what you’re made of.”

“You are so on, my sexy little rabbit,” Adam replied gruffly. He sucked Kris’ lower lip into his mouth and bit it hard.

“Uhhhh…more.”

Adam walked them into the bedroom, laid Kris down on the bed and was about to take up his previous position when he changed his mind. No, I want him on his stomach this time. He stared lustfully at his love, laying there and waiting to be ravaged. Adam licked his lips and reached down to unfasten Kris’ khaki pants.

“You are so on, my sexy little rabbit,” Adam replied gruffly. He sucked Kris’ lower lip into his mouth and bit it hard.

“Uhhhh…more.”

Kris looked back over his shoulder when Adam straddled his thighs and groaned. “Oh god, I love it when you take me like this. Make it hurt good.”

Adam grunted and got up. “I think it’s a whip night, rabbit.”

“Yessss,” Kris hissed, writhing in anticipation.

Smirking, Adam retrieved the whip from his closet and grabbed a condom before returning to the bed. He took in all the smooth skin and chiseled muscle and shuddered. “Pleasure before pain,” he said, settling in between Kris’ legs and spreading his cheeks.

“Both…please,” begged Kris.
“I think I can manage that.” He buried his face and started licking while reaching up to rake his nails down Kris’ back over and over again.

“Yes… just like that… ohhh god,” Kris moaned, gripping the blanket and trying to rock back with every swirl of Adam’s tongue. Harder and harder Adam dug into Kris’ skin, making long red scratches while continuing to lave at his hole. Kris started groaning into the comforter and reached back to pull his cheeks apart even further.

Adam picked up the whip without stopping his tongue. Thwack!

“Shit!” Kris cried out as it lashed across his back. “Again!”

_Need a better angle._ Adam sat back and twirled the leather in the air before bringing it down several times on that perfect ass that he was yearning to fill up. His cock was twitching madly, aching and dripping as Kris sobbed and continued to plead for more. _Got to have him… now._ Adam threw away the whip and prepped himself quickly, shaking with need. He grunted, thrusting deeply into Kris’ wet entrance. Without missing a beat, he dropped onto Kris’ back and began biting skin everywhere he could reach while pounding his cock furiously into that tight hole. _So fucking good… so tight._

Kris scrabbled at the blankets and bit his lip through his moans.

_Smack! Smack!_ Adam spanked him hard on the ass and fucked him, bit him, tore him apart with lust. At last, Adam felt his balls clench and he cried out loudly. But an instant later he flipped Kris onto his back and sucked him greedily, drooling and almost gagging himself on Kris’ thick, hot dick… sucking… sucking… up and down… again and again…

“Oh my god Adammm… yes!”

Adam swallowed, drank, and gulped him down as if his cum was the most refreshing beverage on earth.

“Shit…shit…” Kris moaned.

When he was satisfied that it was all gone, Adam swept Kris up into his arms and crushed him to his chest before rolling them onto their sides.

“Baby,” Kris wheezed, “those workouts… are doing you… wonders.”

“Ohmmmm,” was all he could manage to get out. His lungs were painful but his body was still pulsing with pleasure.

Minutes passed without another word as their hot, sweaty skin gradually cooled and their breathing slowed. After a while, Kris sighed and rolled over to face Adam. “I’m going to miss this while we’re at my parent’s house.”

“Oh my god, please tell me that we’re not going to go without sex for two weeks,” Adam whined.

“No,” Kris chuckled, “I don’t think that’s even possible, but we’ll have to tone it down.”

“I can do that,” he assured Kris, “but I need my rabbit… and my angel.”

“Don’t worry, lover. If my bedroom isn’t an option, we can always visit my old hideouts.”

“Hideouts?”
“Uh-huh, secret places where I used to make out with boys... an old shack in the woods, if it’s still there, my tree house, and this really pretty spot by Lake Conway.”

“You have a tree house?”

“Yep, a really big one that my dad and I built when I was a kid.”

“That is fucking awesome.”

The Mile High Club

“You have to take your shoes off now?”

“Yeah,” answered Kris, pulling off his jacket and placing it in the plastic bin. He glanced at Adam. “How long has it been since you’ve flown?”

Adam frowned and looked down at the ground. “High school... our drama class flew to New York to see a Les Miserables and...”

“It’s okay,” said Kris quickly, “let’s just keep moving.” My poor Adam, will he always be haunted like this? The security line was inching forward.

“No, it’s fine, actually... I remember having a really good time. I was a junior.” He sighed and shook his head as he removed his shoes. “Funny though, how it’s all been lumped together.” Kris looked at him curiously. “I’ll tell you about it later,” Adam said to him with a little smile and pecked him on the cheek. “I’m good, really.”

Kris nodded and then he had to concentrate because they were next in line to go through the sensors. Once they were on the other side, they went to their gate and dropped into the seats. Kris yawned and rubbed his eyes. It was about 5:15am and they were both groggy and pale faced.

“Tell me again why we had to fly out so fucking early?” asked Adam, stretching and trying to get comfortable in the metal chair.

“It was either this or leave at eleven at night. Those were the only two options when I booked our tickets, and I hate flying red eye.”

Adam groaned and shifted around but eventually gave up and just leaned his head to the side and rested it on top of Kris’. “I hope I brought enough warm clothes.”

“That winter jacket you got last week will be fine.” They sat in silence and dozed off a bit while waiting for their flight to start boarding.

An hour later they were in the air and on their way. “I can’t believe we had to pay to check our bags... and what is this supposed to be?” Adam picked up the tiny bag of pretzels that the flight attendants had passed out and quirked an eyebrow.

Kris chuckled. “Breakfast? No free meals anymore.”

“Hmph. Some day I’m going to be a rich and famous recording artist,” Adam said looking out the plane window before turning back to Kris, “and then we’ll fly in style, baby.”
Kris cracked a huge yawn and lifted the seat arm separating them so he could snuggle up to Adam. “I’m going to start calling you puppy,” he laughed.

“Hey, I can’t help being whiny, it’s fucking early.” He put his arm around Kris and leaned his head back.

By the time they hit Dallas for their connecting flight to Little Rock, Adam and Kris were more alert, having both had a good nap on their first leg of the journey. They freshened up in the bathroom and hurried to the gate just in time to start boarding.

“What time to we get in?”

“About one-thirty,” said Kris, settling into the middle seat on the next plane. He’d given Adam the window seat when he saw that the person assigned to the aisle was a handsome man about their age who had been eying Adam appreciatively.

But Adam seemed oblivious to the man, looking deep into Kris’ eyes and smiling brightly. “I’m really excited to meet your parents.”

Awww, he’s so cute. Kris squeezed Adam’s hand and kissed him on the lips, making sure that the man on the aisle could see. Ha, I heard that little sigh of disappointment. “Well you’ll be seeing them soon. It’s only an hour flight from here.”

“I can’t sit still, I feel…nervous.” He bounced his knees up and down and fidgeted. “I’ve never met anyone’s parents before. I mean, of course I’ve met parents in general, but not, you know like this…”

“Calm down, baby, they are going to love you…how could they not?”

Adam smiled and leaned in for another kiss. He may have meant it to be a brief peck, but Kris threaded his hands into Adam’s hair and licked the seam of his lips, not caring that they were in full view of strangers. He’d never really been into public displays of affection with previous boyfriends, but it was different with Adam, as if he wanted the whole world to see how lucky he was to have such a gorgeous boyfriend.

Adam didn’t seem to mind either. He responded instantly and they started making out right there on the plane. Someone behind them coughed pointedly. “Mommy, look! Those two men are kissing!” a little girl squealed from across the aisle. “Don’t point, Maddie, it’s rude.” “Can they do that?” questioned the girl. “Of course they can,” the mother said patiently, “now stop staring and go back to your coloring book.”


“Are you serious?” Kris laughed.

“Why not?” Adam lowered his voice and whispered, “we didn’t have time this morning and I’m starting to feel very awake now.”

“Oh my god, you aren’t joking. Adam, we can’t do that! Those bathrooms are tiny, plus, what if someone needs to get in there?”

“We’ll be quick.” He pressed his mouth right up to Kris’ ear. “Don’t you want to feel my lips around you, angel?”
Kris shuddered. *Hell yes. Damn, sucking each other off while flying thousands of feet in the air? That is so hot.* He stared at Adam and they exchanged mischievous grins.

As if on cue, the fasten seatbelt light turned off right at that moment. “Excuse me,” Kris said to the man on the aisle, who got up and let them pass, but not without throwing Kris a look that said ‘I know what you’re about to get and I’m fucking jealous.’ Kris smiled, trying not to appear too smug. “Thank you.”

They walked causally to the back of the plane. Adam went in first and Kris waited until it seemed that no one was looking. He scratched on the door and was pulled in immediately.

No sounds came from the bathroom, and the woman who left her seat and stood waiting for her turn had no clue that behind that door, Kris was getting one of the fastest, sloppiest and most enjoyable blow jobs he could ever remember experiencing. Nor did she realize that when it was over and Adam was sucking on his cum-covered fingers that Kris didn’t even wait to zip up before giving back just as good as he got. The woman tapped her foot and glanced at her watch. Finally the door opened and the two men walked out together, grinning dopily at each other.

Kris saw the lady and blushed. “Er, he um, lost a contact…had to help find it,” he sputtered lamely. She sniffed disapprovingly and pushed past them.

Adam just rolled his eyes and snorted. “A contact?” he chuckled as they walked back to their seats. “Very original, Kris.”

“Well my brain was a little fuzzy, you know. I blame you.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment.”

Aisle guy seemed to have gotten over his disappointment and winked roguishly at them as they settled back into their seats.

Adam picked up Kris’ arm and examined the two pairs of teeth marks set deeply into his skin. “Ingenious, using your arm as a gag.”

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**Chapter 31**

“Kris! Kris! Over here, honey!”

Kris looked over the heads of the people in the baggage claim area until he saw his mother’s waving hand. He grinned at Adam and they wheeled their suitcases over to three people with bright smiles on their faces. “Hey ma, pop, Danny…it’s really good to see you.” They all hugged and Adam stood back a few feet, watching the reunion. Kris kissed his mother on the cheek and then turned to take his boyfriend’s hand, drawing him closer to the group. “This is Adam, everyone.”
“Nice to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Allen…Danny, or is it Daniel?” He held out his hand to each of them in turn.

“Danny is fine. Everyone has called me that for ages.”

“And it’s Kim, dear, and my husband Neil,” said Kris’ mom.

“My brother’s name is Neil, too,” Adam responded, still looking a bit unsure of himself in this new social situation. “I guess it would get confusing if our families ever got together, I mean, well…that is…” Adam swung his arms a little and fidgeted with the collar of his wool coat.

_He’s still nervous._ Kris came to the rescue. “Our families should definitely meet someday,” he said confidently. “You guys would get a real kick out of Adam’s grandmother.”

Adam chuckled quietly. “She is quite a character.”

“Can I help with the bags?” asked Neil, lightly clapping Adam on the shoulder.

Kris saw him flinch at the unexpected physical contact. “Uh, no…no that’s fine. Thanks,” Adam said in a controlled voice.

_Guess I should have warned him._ He grabbed his hand and they walked a little bit behind everyone to the airport garage. “Sorry about that,” he whispered, “my family is the touchy-feely sort.”

“Don’t worry about it, I don’t know why I’m so jumpy,” Adam sighed. “I came here to help you, not the other way around.”

“Hey now, we’re allowed to help each other at the same time. You’re new at this.”

Adam squeezed his hand tightly. “Thank you, angel. I just want to make a good first impression. Your relatives, well, I don’t really care if they like me or not, but your parents…”

“Adam, I promise that they will be singing your praises by the end of the day.”

“Here we are,” said Neil, stopping at massive, red SUV. After putting the luggage in the trunk, they all piled in.

“Boys, are you hungry for lunch?” asked Kim from the front seat.

“Starving, ma. Our flight left really early and they never feed you on planes these days.”

“Yeah,” added Adam, “they might as well have given us individual pretzels…those bags were tiny!”

Danny laughed from his place beside Kris, who was in the middle. “We should take Adam to Backyard Burgers.”

“No way, little brother, that place is exactly like a million restaurants I’ve been to out west. Besides, I want to give him a taste of quality southern food.”

“Well he’ll get that at home,” said Kim proudly. “I hope you’re not a vegetarian, Adam, because I’ve had a roast in the oven for hours now.”

“I’m definitely a carnivore,” Adam pronounced, “and I’ve heard wonderful things about your cooking from Kris.”
Kim looked at her son fondly before turning back to Adam. “I’ve heard the same about yours. Maybe you’d like to help me in the kitchen while you’re visiting?”

“Love to!” Adam exclaimed happily, his face stretched into a wide, beaming smile.

“Well how about the Purple Cow?” suggested Neil.

“Perfect! They have the most amazing milkshakes, baby,” said Kris, ignoring Danny’s silent giggle as he mouthed ‘baby?’

Adam continued to grin. “Sounds great.”

By the time lunch was over, Adam looked significantly more relaxed, and Kris was relieved to see him laughing even though it meant he had to endure Adam swapping tales with Danny about whose brother was more annoying.

“You win, Adam,” Danny chuckled as they got back into the car, “getting a wedgie in the middle of singing a spring concert takes the cake.”

“Wow,” Adam said, looking stunned when he saw the inside of the Allen household, taking in all the candles, doilies with knickknacks on them, Christmas stockings, wreaths and decorations everywhere. And of course, an enormous Douglas fir tree taking up an entire side of the living room.

“Yes,” Kris chuckled, “it’s a bit like walking into one of those country stores, isn’t it? My mom loves Christmas.”

“I can see that. I’m amazed that there aren’t little elves running around in here.”

Kris burst into laughter just as his parents and Danny came into the house carrying the luggage.

“What’s so funny, K?”

“Nothing Danny,” he chortled, handing the house keys back to his father.

“Kim,” said Adam, “you have a real knack for color and design. What a beautiful house.”

“Oh thank you!” she said, obviously flattered. Neil and Danny gave Adam the thumbs up behind her back.

“Let me show Adam around, ma. I’m sure he wants to see how well you’ve decorated the rest of the house,” he said, trying not to laugh.

“I made up your room, honey and …er well, your bed is quite small, but…” she said quickly, going pink in the cheeks.

Kris had never had any of his boyfriends spend the night here. She’s a bit out of her element, too. Adam’s family is much more open. “Don’t worry, I’m sure we’ll manage,” he said, patting her on the arm. “There’s not much to see, it’s not nearly as big as your house,” he told Adam as they lugged their suitcases up the stairs.

Adam waved a hand in the air. “It’s absolutely adorable, just like you. In fact, we should just put you on top of the Christmas tree, angel.”

“Haha.” Kris slapped him playfully on the ass. “Okay, here we are. Like I said, it’s not much,
“But…Mmph!” His mouth was suddenly full of Adam’s tongue. Kris kicked his door closed and even managed to push in the lock before he succumbed to long arms and legs manhandling him onto the bed. “Baby,” he gasped in between kisses, “oh god…”

“Been waiting for those lips all afternoon.” Adam said, drawing back a little and brushing his fingertips across Kris’ mouth.

“K?”

Kris groaned and turned his head toward the door. “What do you want, Danny?” He heard his brother chuckling on the other side. It’s going to be like this the whole time. How on earth are we going to manage for two weeks? They are just going to have to deal with us being all over each other.

“Pop wants to show Adam his workshop, but I’ll tell him you guys are…busy, if you want.”

Adam giggled. “It’s fine,” he whispered.

“We’ll be right down,” Kris called and rolled his eyes. “My dad’s a carpenter and he’s very proud of his workshop. If he didn’t have to build houses, he’d spend all of his time in there.”

“I’d like to see it,” said Adam, kissing Kris on the forehead. “Come on.”

It was a chilly now that the sun was setting, and they had to bundle up before going outside to the large, free standing shed. “Ahhhh,” sighed Adam when they stepped into the heated room, “I am so not used to this weather.”

“But you look so cute with your mittens and scarf,” Kris teased, dodging when Adam tried to swat him with the mittens.

Neil smiled. “So here it is, built it myself from the ground up,” he said, puffing out his chest a bit.

Adam looked around and his jaw fell open a little. “This is…this is amazing! Did you make this, too?” He walked over to a dark mahogany rocking chair that sat in the corner of the well-organized workshop. It was finely made with intricate designs carved in the arms and back.

“I did.”

“Neil, it’s a crime that you’re building houses when you can do something like this.” He ran a finger down the smooth wood. “You’re an artist.”

“What a nice thing to say,” he grinned.

“I’m serious. People would pay good money for something so beautiful and expertly crafted. I certainly would.”

“I’ve been telling him that for ages, but there’s not much of a market for this around here,” said Kris. “Conway is growing like crazy and the housing industry is exploding.”

Suddenly a phone rang. “Wow, this place has everything,” said Adam raising his eyebrows appreciatively.

Neil went to answer the phone. “Hello, dear.”

“My dad is really good with things like that,” said Kris, “he even wired my tree house with electricity and heat.”
“You’re kidding me! Oh my god, you didn’t tell me that it was heated!” Adam said excitedly. “Do you know what that means?”

“Yeah,” Kris said quietly, “that our balls won’t freeze when we’re having hot --”

“Kris,” Neil interrupted when he hung up with his wife, “your mother wants to speak with you privately.”

“Um…” He looked at Adam uncertainly. I don’t really want to leave him, but…

“It’s okay, I’d love to see more of your dad’s work.”

“Alright then.” I bet I know what this is about. He pressed a quick kiss to Adam’s cheek and went back into the house. “What’s up?” he asked, taking off his gloves and coat. His mom had her head in the oven and was checking on the roast. “This is about Christmas and Adam, isn’t it?”

Kim stood up, closed the oven door and wiped her hands on her apron. “Yes, honey. Christmas Eve is four days away and…I haven’t told anyone that Adam is here. I’ve been debating it ever since our last phone call, but I don’t know what to do.”

Kris felt that guilt squirming around in his stomach and tried to push it down. She’s trying to get me to decide for her. He stuck his chin out defiantly. “You know them better than I do, ma, I can’t tell you what to do.”

“I feel like I’m in a no win situation,” she said sadly.

“Why don’t you just stand up to her for once in your life?” Kris said in frustration, clearly implying his grandmother. No one is ever good enough for her.

“She’s my mother, Kris.”

“All the more reason. Look, I can’t help you with this. I don’t care what you do…tell her or don’t tell her.”

It had always been like this, and Kris was stunned that he hadn’t realized sooner just how much he was like his mother. Always worried about pleasing people, catering to everyone and relying on the others to make decisions for me. Well no more, and I’m not helping her do it either.

“I…I wish I could be more like you,” said Kim, “I’m really proud of you, that you’re figuring this out for yourself, but it’s too late for me.”

Well that was unexpected. “No it’s not,” he said kindly. “Adam has taught me so much, how to be brave, how to ask for what I want, how to speak my mind…you can do that, too. Pop would love it if you did, you know.”

She sighed and nodded. “You’re learning this from Adam?”

“Well, he’s kind of my inspiration.” Kris shook his head. “You have no idea how courageous he is.”

“He seems like a wonderful young man, honey. I’m really happy for you.”

“Then support me, support us openly.”

She took a deep breath and put her hands on her hips. “I’m not going to tell them. Adam will be a surprise and we’ll just…I’ll just deal with it.” She smiled with trembling lips. “The look on your
grandmother’s face will be…”

“Priceless,” Kris chuckled and then hugged his mother. “Hey, this isn’t easy for me either, believe me. I’m terrified to be honest with you, but it’s high time for me to start being myself and whoever doesn’t like it, well too bad for them.” He stepped back and looked into her worried eyes. *It’s not my job to comfort her.* “You should talk to dad about this. I’m going to go rescue Adam from the workshop,” he said, smiling and resisting the urge to make everything better for her. *It’s not my job.* He put on his coat and gloves and went back outside. When he returned to the shed, he found his dad and Adam deep in discussion.

“And how do you get those tiny designs to come out so perfectly?”

Neil got up and brought over a small carving tool.

“You do this by hand?” Adam asked with wide eyes. “Wow, I’m really impressed. Do you do special orders? I guarantee you that my mom would want one of your rocking chairs…oh, hey baby!” he said when Kris came through the door and closed it.

“Hey yourself,” grinned Kris. “I was coming out here to rescue you, but I see you’re doing just fine.”

Adam nodded. “Your dad is amazing.”

Neil beamed and squeezed Adam’s shoulder affectionately. “It’s not everyone who appreciates my work. Adam here has quite an eye.”

*Oh my god, my boyfriend and my dad are bonding. That is best Christmas present in the history of forever!*

The workshop phone rang again. “That’s your mom telling us that supper is ready. Let’s not keep her waiting,” said Neil.

“Tell her we’ll be right there, pop. I need to tell Adam something real quick.”

“Don’t take too long.”

“I won’t,” he replied as his dad left. “Adam, I was just talking to my mom and…she didn’t tell anyone about you. You’re going to be a Christmas surprise, baby,” he said a little shakily. Despite how confident he’d been with his mom, he hadn’t been lying when he’d said that he was terrified.

“It’s going to be all right,” Adam said soothingly, pulling Kris into a hug.

Kris buried his face into the crook of Adam’s neck and inhaled his scent. It was calming, familiar.

“You’re sniffing me again,” Adam chuckled.

“You smell like home.” He looked up into his lover’s eyes. “Please don’t leave my side on Christmas Eve.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it. What about Christmas Day?”

“That will just be us, my parents and Danny…we’ve always done it like that.” Kris sighed. “We better go.”

“Not before I kiss you, angel.” It was a tender exchange, full of love and reassurance, and by the time they went back into the house, Kris was feeling a bit stronger.
In addition to a sumptuous roast, Kim had outdone herself with southern style side dishes including homemade cornbread, green beans almondine, a hash potato casserole, brown sugar glazed carrots and special for Kris, his favorite mac and cheese.

Adam heaped his plate full with a little of everything, looking delighted to be sampling a “new cuisine” as he called it. “Mmmm, Kim, this is delicious,” said Adam, “you’re going to have to teach me how to make this casserole.”

“Of course I will, dear, I’m sure that Kris misses my cooking and it would cheer my heart to know that you’re feeding him well.”

“Adam is brilliant in the kitchen,” Kris nodded, and then winked at his boyfriend coyly. *In more ways than one.* He leaned over and whispered in Adam’s ear. “If you make me mac and cheese like this, I promise to make your head spin with pleasure.”

Adam gave a little gasp. “Uh, on second thought, maybe we should start with the macaroni and cheese,” he said to Kris’ mom.

*Can’t wait until tonight.* Kris had a special surprise in store for Adam.

Danny laughed out loud. “That’s his favorite since, I don’t know, forever. I’m sure he’d die and go to heaven if you made it for him.”

“Oh, please excuse me,” said Kim when the kitchen phone rang. She picked it up and looked at the caller ID. “I’ll just take this in the living room,” she said nervously.


Adam jumped about a foot. “What the fu --” he blurted before censoring himself.

Everyone laughed. “It’s the clock,” Danny chuckled, pointing to the wall. “It plays a different bird call every hour.”

“Jesus!” Adam exclaimed, breathing rapidly.

“Careful, baby, if you say that around my grandma she’s going to pitch a fit and start lecturing you.”

Adam scowled. “You all seem to tiptoe around this woman. Why is that?”

All three men looked uncomfortable and Kris scratched his head. “Well, she’s got a really strong personality and a lot of…opinions.”

“Hmph, well I have a lot of *opinions,* too. No, don’t worry, I’m not going to start a fight or anything, but I’m not going to be pushed around either.”

*I adore him.* Kris rested his chin in his hands, utterly besotted with the dark haired beauty sitting next to him. Adam’s face softened when he saw Kris staring at him like a lovesick puppy. They locked eyes for a moment. *Screw it.* Kris kissed him full on the lips and he didn’t give a shit even when his mom came back into the kitchen. Absolute silence followed their kiss. *Well that got their attention.* “Get used to it, family. I love this man with all my heart and I’m not afraid to show it.” He looked elated; his smile was so bright and infectious that no one could help but smile back at him.

Kim squared her shoulders and clapped her hands together, suddenly all business. “Who’s up for
After dessert, Adam insisted on helping Kim with the dishes and Kris took the opportunity to slip away to prepare his surprise. He came back thirty minutes later just as they were finishing up. “Where did you go, angel?”

Kris’ mom quirked an eyebrow at ‘angel’ but didn’t say anything. “You’ll find out later,” he said with a sparkle in his eye.

Adam rolled down his sleeves and dried his hands on a snowflake-patterned dishtowel. “Hmmm, you look like you’ve been up to no good,” he said, winking.

Kris’ mom drained the sink and took off her apron. “I think I’ll go and watch the news with your father. You boys are welcome to join us if you’d like.”

“Thanks, ma, but I think we’ll turn in early.”

“Okay, honey. You two must be tired after traveling all day. Breakfast will be ready at eight tomorrow.”

*She’s so cute, even if she’s a bit clueless.* Adam and Kris went upstairs and said goodnight to Danny on their way to Kris’ bedroom. “Uh-huh, yeah goodnight…sure,” he said knowingly. Kris stuck out his tongue at him. “Whatever, K, see you in the morning. Just remember that ma and pop’s room is right in between yours and mine. God, I can’t wait to see the look on their faces at breakfast,” he snorted.

Kris rolled his eyes. “Go to bed, Daniel,” he said to his brother while Adam laughed at them. Danny blew them a kiss and shut his door.

“He and Neil would get along famously,” said Adam, still chuckling.

“No doubt.” Kris agreed. “Now come in here.” He pulled Adam into his room and closed the door. “We’ve got about twenty minutes to kill until my parent’s head up to bed, and then I’m going to show you what I was doing while you were washing dishes.”

“Twenty minutes? What on earth can we possibly do with all that time?” Adam smirked, walking into Kris until their groins touched.

“I propose a game.”

“A game? Does it involve sex? Please tell me that it does because I am hotter than hell for you right now.”

“Sex is definitely on the agenda tonight, lover, but you’ll have to be patient.”

“Such a cocktease.”

“Trust me, it will be worth it,” he grinned mischievously.

Adam pouted. “What’s the game?”

Kris took out a pair of dice from his pocket and handed them to Adam to examine.

“Where did you get this little treasure?” His pout turned into a wicked smile at once.

“Oh, just something I picked up. You want to play?”
“Fuck, yes!”

They sat down on the floor facing each other. “You go first,” said Kris.

Adam rolled the dice and clapped his hands excitedly when one die said ‘touch’ and ‘below waste’ came up on the other. “I love this game already.” He crawled over to Kris and began rubbing his crotch in steady circles.

Kris groaned and closed his eyes. “Mmmm, god…that feels so…okay…okay my turn,” he said with effort.

“You want me to stop?” Adam asked with his mouth an inch away from Kris’ neck.

“Not really, but the game is more fun if we do different things.”

“Good point. Okay, you go.” He removed his hand and Kris sighed at the loss, but picked up the dice quickly, hoping to repay the favor. ‘Lick’ and ‘lips’ were next.

“Oh yes, this is going to be good. No kissing, I just get to lick them.” Adam shuddered in anticipation and leaned back on his hands. Kris straddled him and cupped his face. “Close your eyes.” Adam did. Starting at the corner of his mouth, Kris dragged his tongue across Adam’s upper lip and all the way to the other side.

“Oh my god, this is pure torture…I want to kiss you so bad!” Kris felt Adam’s dick move against him. “I’m not done with you yet, lover.” He repeated the same action on Adam’s lower lip, slowly licking another wet stripe but stopping to circle a few of his favorite freckles along the way.

Adam was whimpering and panting through his open mouth, his lips shining with Kris’ spit. *I’m going to be attacked in about two seconds.* He hopped off of Adam’s lap and sat down across from him again. “You’re turn,” he said impishly.

“Fuck,” Adam rasped. He took the dice and rolled them with a shaking hand. “Kiss and wildcard…what does that mean?”

“That you can kiss whatever part of my body you want.”

“Thank god!” And with that, he launched at Kris and pinned him to the floor, ravaging his mouth passionately.

*That was fun while it lasted.* Kris wrapped his legs around Adam who began to grind into him frantically. But then he heard footsteps coming up the stairs and squeezed his thighs to get Adam’s attention. “Sshhhh…” They froze and waited until they heard a door close. “Time to get up, baby.”

“You have got to be kidding,” Adam puffed.

“Nope,” Kris smiled. “Trust me.”

Adam let out a long, agonized groan and rolled off. “You realize that I’m in actual pain here?”

“Me too. Just a little bit longer, I promise. Now grab your supplies and bundle up, because it’s cold outside.”

“Outside? Does that mean…?”
“You’ll see.” I can’t wait to see his face!

They crept down the stairs and headed out into the cold night, Adam shivering as he followed Kris into the back yard. Kris’ flashlight finally landed at the bottom of a wide wooden step. He held out his hand and Adam took it. Once he was at the top of the stairs, Kris clicked off the flashlight, opened the door and pulled Adam inside.

“Oh yes, mmmm, it’s so warm in here, but I can’t see a thing,” said Adam.

Kris closed the door and flipped the switch, eyes trained on Adam.

“Ooohhhhh…wow.”

About a fifty white Christmas lights were strung up around the walls and a red glass lantern hung in the corner, glowing softly and reflecting its light in one of the two windows. Right through the center of the room was the midsection of a tree that came in through the bottom and had thick braches exiting the slanting roof in three places. Adam walked around, his face lit with childlike wonder. He took off his coat and mittens and ran his hand along the bark of the tree until he found a heart carved into it.

Kris held his breath and watched. Look closer.

Adam kneeled down and looked at the initials engraved inside the heart. “K.A. plus A.L.” he read aloud. “Kris, angel…oh my god…this is the sweetest, most precious…” His eyes were glassy with tears as he gazed at Kris.

“You like it?”

“I love it.” Adam got up, walked over to Kris and put a finger under his chin, lifting it slightly. “You are the best thing that has ever happened to me, and if it had to take ten years for me to meet you, then it was so worth the wait.”

Kris’ heart was beating rapidly and he swallowed the lump in his throat. “I feel the same way about you,” he whispered. Is it possible to be so in love that it hurts?

Adam bent his head and placed a single soft kiss on Kris’ lips. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

They stood there, just staring at each other for a minute until something caught Adam’s eye. “There’s more?” He walked over to one of the walls and squinted his eyes.

“Yeah, ever since I was a kid I used to carve them,” Kris said as he removed his jacket, “and when I come back here to visit I add new ones.”

Adam walked around, trailing his hand across the other hearts with initials Kris had drawn over the years. “There’s so many of them,” he said with a tinge of sadness.

Kris dropped his head a little. “I know. I mean lots of them are just crushes, you know, silly boyhood ones. There’s even a few girls initials…that was before I figured things out,” he chuckled softly, “but yeah…” Kris thought about all boys that had broken his heart. “I was boring.”

Adam looked at him skeptically. “I don’t believe you.”

“It’s true,” Kris assured him, “when you don’t have any of your own opinions, when you just go
along with everything and no one really knows who you are…you’re boring.”

“That,” Adam said coming back to stand in front of Kris, “is the last word I would use to describe you.”

“Well I’m different now. See that?” he said, pointing to the tree, “ours is the only one on there. Pop said I was never allowed to.”

“You broke the rule,” said Adam, smirking.

“You’re worth any trouble I get in to.” He fitted his body into Adam’s arms and sighed contentedly. “I actually broke a couple rules,” he said as Adam swayed them a bit.

“Oh?”

“Mnhm. I stole these lights from my mom’s stash.”

“Such a naughty rabbit,” he teased lightly. “So just how thick are these walls?”

Kris looked up into his boyfriend’s beautiful eyes. “This room is insulated if that’s what you mean. No one will hear us.”

“Good, because I don’t think I can wait any longer. I want you.”

*I’ll never get tired of hearing that.* The idea that someone like Adam thought that he, simple, plain Kris, was so desirable made him feel on top of the world. He gave Adam a bright smile and walked over to the corner of the tree house to a small wooden chest.

“You did think of everything, didn’t you?” said Adam as Kris pulled out a few blankets and laid them on the wooden floor.

“Wouldn’t want us getting splinters.”

Standing in the middle of the blankets, Adam began unbuttoning Kris’ shirt, stopping after every button to kiss the newly exposed skin. After the last one was undone, he pushed open the shirt and let it fall to the ground, revealing Kris’ well-defined chest and abs. “Gorgeous,” Adam whispered, leaning down to nibble at the crook of Kris’ neck while running hands up and down his naked back.

Kris felt fingers brush the healing scratches from several days ago and shuddered, then moaned when Adam slid those long digits under his waistband to caress his ass. Wetness began to spread in the front of his pants.

“What do you want, angel?” Adam asked softly.

*Say it. Say what you really want.* “I want you to go down on me.”

Adam licked his lips and unfastened Kris’ pants, unzipping them tooth by tooth as he stared hungrily. “Ask and you shall receive.” He pulled the khakis with Kris’ briefs down all the way to his ankles. It was extremely rare for Adam to be on his knees before Kris. *First time, actually.* Even on the plane, he had sat on the sink with Adam bending over his lap and every other time Kris had been on his back. *Wow.* Looking down to see those startlingly blue eyes gazing up at him had to be the most erotic thing ever. “You don’t have to do that,” Kris said when Adam began to remove his shoes.

“Let me.” He continued until Kris was completely nude, standing in his boyhood tree house about to
be worshiped by freckled lips. Kris didn’t realize he was holding his breath until it all came out when Adam opened his mouth wide and, eyes still raised, closed it around Kris’ stiff length.

The moist heat felt heavenly. He twined his hands in Adam’s black locks and watched those lips slide, stretching around him, up and down…up and down… “Ohhhhh baby…you are getting so good at this…s-so…ohhhh god…”

Adam smiled with his mouth full and pushed his nose all the way to Kris’ belly, gagging just a bit and then pulling back, his eyes watering. He looked up again as if to say, ‘just for you, angel.’ Kris gasped and reached down to wipe a single tear from the corner of Adam’s eye. So much trust...so much love. And then his brain couldn’t think anymore because Adam popped off and sucked Kris’ balls into his mouth, rolling them around again and again until Kris’ knees almost buckled. He had to steady himself, hands on Adam’s shoulders and his head reeling with pleasure while Adam stroked him and licked his balls. “Oh!” he cried out when he felt fingers massaging back towards his hole.

“Mmmmm,” Adam hummed, his fingers creeping nearer their goal. Just shy of it however, he stood up, trembling and breathing shallowly. “I need you…now.”

Kris was dripping onto the blankets and panting. He couldn’t speak. All he could do was show Adam how ready he was, so he dropped to the floor on all fours and arched his ass high into the air. He heard Adam moan with desire and then the sound of clothes coming off, the rip of a condom packet and finally, Adam’s hot breath on the back of his neck. Cool lube and hot flesh combined, pushing, stretching into him all the way. Kris hung his head, mouth open and drooling a bit as Adam began to thrust in and out.

Adam rested his upper body on Kris’ back, wrapped his arms tightly around Kris’ chest and humped him like an animal in heat.

“Adam…harder, yesssss…” Kris hissed, throwing his head back in ecstasy as Adam sped up and bit into his shoulder.

“Oh god,” Adam groaned, grunting with every stroke.

Faster…deeper…again and again…

Suddenly Kris felt Adam’s hand around his dick, pulling, tugging…jerking it rhythmically. “Yes…yes…yes…Adam…Adam!” The pleasure was building to a scorching intensity, threatening to burn him up. “Adam!” Kris wailed, his entire body quaking in release as his cum spilled over his lover’s hand and onto the blanket below. As the waves of bliss continued to wash over him, he squeezed his muscles, causing Adam to cry out and slam into him on last time before he fell apart.

Kris couldn’t hold himself up anymore. He collapsed onto his stomach and grunted as Adam fell on top of him. He sucked air into his lungs, feeling dizzy and high.

“So not boring, angel.”
Kris was starting to panic. It was two o’clock on Christmas Eve and his relatives would be arriving in a few hours. He sat on the edge of his bed trying not imagine the catastrophe that he knew was coming, focusing on Adam’s warm hand rubbing soothing circles on his back. “It’s going to be okay, angel.”

Kris didn’t say anything. Why did I agree to this? Oh my god, I can’t do it…I can’t face her. He looked at Adam. The worry and fear must have been clear on his face. “Kris, oh baby, you’re really scared. Come here.” Adam gathered him up into a tight hug. “You know what Sheila always tells me to do when I feel like I’m freaking out?”

“What?” Kris mumbled into Adam’s neck.

“Try to distract my brain, you know, think about something else or keep busy.” He stood up, took Kris by the hand and pulled him down to their makeshift bed on the floor where they had spent the last two nights after repeatedly falling out of Kris’ bed. Adam spooned around him amidst the piles of blankets and pillows, stroking his arm gently. “Remember last night?” he whispered into his ear.

Kris smiled despite the crushing anxiety he felt. “How could I forget?” They’d had another evening in the tree house, only this time Adam had taken Kris standing right up against the tree in the middle of the room. He had some nice new scratches from the bark to show for it, too. Kris felt his body relax as he recalled the scene.

“You’re thinking about it, aren’t you?” said Adam in a voice that told Kris he was smirking.

“Yeah…I think I still might have one or two splinters in my ass.”

Adam chuckled and kissed Kris on the back of the neck.

“Adam,” Kris began, rolling over to face him, “my grandma is a fanatic. She thinks that everyone who doesn’t believe what she does is going to hell. I know that there are a couple of my relatives that would be more supportive of me if it weren’t for her. Shit, even Grandpa tiptoes around her.”

“She’s an old lady, Kris. What on earth is everyone are afraid of?”

Kris sighed and scooted closer. “Guilt, being preached at…I don’t know. She doesn’t talk to my aunt Talia anymore.”

“Why not?”

“Because she converted to Islam,” Kris replied, rolling his eyes. “Anyway, I’m just warning you, okay?”

“Listen to me. My job here is to support you in standing up for yourself. Don’t worry about me one bit.”

“But what if she’s rude to you?” Kris was not only concerned about himself, but he felt protective of Adam as well.

Adam actually laughed at this. “Look, I admit that this all new for me and I may be a little jumpy or uncomfortable at times, but last I checked, grandmas were not on my list of triggers.”
“Yeah, but what if she says something that, you know, really upsets you?”

“Kris, stop it,” said Adam firmly. “You just focus on yourself. What could she possibly say to upset me anyway? She doesn’t even know me. And I can handle arguing about religion if that’s her thing, believe me, you don’t grow up Jewish without it. Besides, if I can handle this…” he gestured back and forth between their bodies, “…then I can handle anything.”

Of course, that makes sense. His fear of betrayal or abandonment has to be way worse than the idea of a disapproving woman who isn’t even related to him. “Okay, you’ve convinced me.”

“Good, now let’s go down and help your mom with dinner.”

“Aww, can’t we just stay here and make out for a while?” Without Kris realizing it, Adam had effectively distracted him from his nervousness.

“That is very tempting,” Adam said as he pulled Kris closer to him, “but your mom is slaving away all by herself. I know she could use a hand.”

“Wow, never thought I’d see the day when you would choose cooking over kissing,” he laughed.

“Hmm, maybe just a quick one,” Adam responded with a smirk, placing his hands on the back of Kris’ head and drawing him in.

A good ten minutes later they headed down the stairs, both looking distinctly rumpled. Kris smoothed his hair down and tucked his shirt into his pants. “Now that’s what I call a quickie,” he said, running his tongue on the inside of his cheek where he’d chomped down on it to quiet his moans.

Adam winked and pinched his ass just before they reached the kitchen. “Kim…”

“Oh thank goodness…I could really use your help, Adam,” she said, tucking her hair behind her ears and wiping a hand across her brow. “Usually my sister Talia is here to lend a hand, but…”

“Hmph.” Kris frowned and went to hug his mother. “Don’t worry, ma, we’ll help.”

“Absolutely,” said Adam, “what needs to be done?”

Adam was in his element, and even though there were dishes he was unfamiliar with, he had no problem making them. Kris was assigned to be his sous chef, opening jars, stirring pots and being available for Adam to grope on occasion. Ha, ma didn’t even blush at that one. It was fair to say that over the last few days, the Allen’s had grown used to the men being in almost constant physical contact with each other. Too bad we can’t be as open as we are around Adam’s family, but it’s a start. He went to the pantry to retrieve a jar of beets. When he turned around, he saw Adam and his mother standing side by side, her peeling potatoes and Adam slicing okra. Adam was humming as he worked and Kim swayed a bit to the nameless tune. Watching them, Kris felt his throat tighten and he swallowed thickly.

Who the hell cares about anything else that happens today, this is true happiness.

“Do you sing, Adam?” Kim asked.

“I do. I even know a ton of Christmas songs. I used to be in choir when I was younger.”
He’s sharing a piece of himself, but not too much. Damn, he’s so courageous. Kris walked to the counter and dumped the beets into a small glass bowl. He nudged Adam with his hip and they smiled at each other.

“I don’t suppose you know ‘Angels We Have Heard on High’…it’s my favorite,” said Kim.

Adam nodded. “That’s a beautiful song.”

“Would you sing it for me?”

“Um, okay, but I’m sure that Kris--”

“That one is totally out of my range, baby, and ma knows it.”

Looking just a tad nervous, Adam put down the knife and closed his eyes. But when he opened his mouth and began to sing, Kris saw his body relax.

Angels we have heard on high,  
Sweetly singing o’er the plains  
And the mountains in reply  
Echoing their joyous strains.  
Gloria...

Kris was completely carried away by the sweet sounds echoing throughout the kitchen. He glanced at his mother as saw that she, too, was entranced. After a verse or two, Adam seemed to let go of any hesitation he’d had, and he belted out the refrain. “Gloria, in excelsis Deo!” On and on came the angelic melody until the last note hung in the air. Adam opened his eyes to find that Kris’ father and brother were there as well. All four of the Allen’s stared at him in amazement and he blushed.

That’s my boyfriend, my lover. Kris looked around at his family proudly. “Isn’t he incredible?”

They all nodded fervently and began heaping praise on Adam, who shuffled his feet and stuttered his thanks, smiling shyly. He’s so adorable. It was rare to see him like this, and Kris imagined a ten-year-old boy instead of the grown man standing there. After a few minutes of enduring the accolades, Adam cleared his throat. “We should get back to the food.”

When the doorbell rang at five, Kris didn’t hear it. After everything was ready for supper, Neil had asked them to join him and Danny in the workshop. “Danny and I have been talking about your idea, Adam, about starting a mail order business.”

“That’s wonderful, pop!” exclaimed Kris.

“You’ll do really well, Neil, I’m sure of it,” Adam said encouragingly. “I’m glad I brought my camera…would you mind if I take pictures of the rocking chair to show my mom back home?”

“Not at all!” he replied with enthusiasm, beaming and patting Adam on the back. Adam didn’t flinch this time. “Well, I hear voices coming from the house. I better go in and help your mother get everyone settled.”

Kris’ eyes went wide. Oh shit.
“Don’t worry,” said his dad gently, “you have nothing to be ashamed of, son. You and Adam have my full support.”

“Mine, too,” added Danny.

“Thanks you guys, that really means a lot to me,” he said a bit shakily.

“Neil, Danny, could you give us a few minutes alone?” asked Adam. They nodded and left. “Kris, baby, you can do this, I know you can.” He put his hands on Kris’ shoulders and looked deep into his eyes.

“I wish my Meme could be here.” Adam looked at him curiously. “My dad’s mom, she died last year…we were really close,” Kris smiled sadly. “You know that blue and white quilt I have? She made that for me before I left for LA. Anyway, she was just about the only one who had the guts to stand up to grandma.”

“She would have wanted you to be yourself,” said Adam softly.

“Yeah.” Kris heaved a huge breath and tried to push down his fear. He rose up to his toes and pressed his lips to Adam’s. “Okay…okay, I’m ready…yes.” Grasping Adam’s hand tightly, he went back into the house, his heart pounding against his rib cage.

“Kristopher, my boy! I was just asking Kim where you—” Grandma Silvia stopped short, smile slipping when she spotted Adam. Her eyes snapped to their joined hands. All around the living room, Kris’ aunts, uncles, and cousins froze in place…even his grandpa seemed be holding his breath. Silvia whipped her head towards Danny. “A friend of yours?”

“No, Grandma.”

Kris’ breath was coming in shallow bursts. He squeezed Adam’s hand, wanting to cry and throw up at the same time. Adam stepped up boldly to the old woman but didn’t let go of Kris’ hand. He looked at Kris and gave him an enormous, bright, and loving smile. Kris couldn’t help but be affected by that grin and it made him feel stronger. “Grandma, this is Adam, my boyfriend.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Kris’ seventeen-year-old cousin Emily before clapping her hands over her mouth.

“Kim! How could you let this happen?” Silvia shouted at her daughter.

“I…I…he’s…” Kris’ mom stuttered, backing away.

“No.” Kris, though still feeling nauseous and close to tears, could not stand by and let her say such things to his love. “You can’t send him away, Grandma. This isn’t your house and I want him here.”

“How dare you speak to me like that? Such insolence! I know your mother raised you to respect your elders.”

She doesn’t love me. She doesn’t… Tears began to well up in his eyes but he stood his ground, gripping Adam’s hand so hard that knew it must be hurting him. But Adam only squeezed back reassuringly.
“D-don’t say that to him,” Kim said with trembling lips. “It was m-my decision to have Adam here.”

“Kimberly!” Silvia exclaimed, clearly shocked. “You of all people know how wrong this is. Don’t you care about your son’s salvation at all?”

The room full of people continued to watch the drama unfold. Kris’ grandfather shuffled up to his wife and put a hand on her arm. “Silvia dear, why don’t we all just sit down.” But she brushed him off and continued to stare daggers at Kim.

“I’m with her,” said Kris’ aunt Mabel, suddenly striding into the hallway and standing next to her mother. “You knew this would happen,” she said, looking at her sister angrily. “Why go and upset everyone like this, and on Christmas Eve!”

“He’s my son, and I want him to be happy,” Kim said, twisting a dishtowel in her hands and looking exactly how Kris felt.

“Happy?” Silvia snorted. “You think he’s going to be happy when he’s burning in hell?”

“That’s enough.” Adam’s voice was cool and firm.

“It’s okay,” Kris said, trying not sniffle, “you don’t have to get involved in this, Adam.”

“It’s not okay. I seem to remember something in the Bible about love and tolerance.”

“Oh? And what are you, some kind of new age Christian?” Silvia asked, her voice dripping with disdain.

“No, I’m Jewish,” said Adam proudly.

“For heaven’s sake! Don’t you go telling me about the Bible, young man! That’s twice your damned, Jewish and gay? I bet you corrupted my grandson, didn’t you?” she yelled into his face.

Kris seriously considered running upstairs to his room to escape the pain that was wrenching his gut, the absolute rejection he felt from his grandmother. She used to tuck me in at night and read me stories…why doesn’t she love me? But he couldn’t do it. He turned and looked at Adam, standing there bravely with his jaw thrust out and enduring her unjustified tirade.

“Stop it!” Kris shouted. “Leave him alone, Grandma! He didn’t corrupt me…I’m gay! I’ve always been gay and I always will be. Why can’t you just love me for who I am!”

Several people gasped, fingers to their mouths in stunned disbelief. Kris’ baby nephew, Freddie, began to cry in his mother’s arms.

“Kristopher. I, unlike some people here,” she began, glaring pointedly at Kris’ mom, “care about your soul. Surely you understand that.”

“You don’t care about me, you haven’t cared about me in years,” he choked out. “You only love me if I’m who you want me to be. I can’t, I won’t do that anymore,” he finished in a steadier voice.

“That goes for all of you,” Kris said to the rest of the room, pulling Adam closer to his side. Adam gazed down at him proudly.
I’m doing it…I’m doing it. His heart was still racing madly with adrenaline and anxiety, but the nausea was fading. Suddenly he felt his father’s hands on his back. “Silvia,” said Neil, “Adam is our guest and he is staying whether you like it or not. And I will not permit you to continue to disrespect my wife and son. You can either accept that or leave,” he concluded sternly.

The old lady gaped at him and then turned to her daughter. “And what about you? Do you support this…this…” she gestured to Adam and Kris, “enough that you’d kick your own mother out?”

Kim had tied the towel into a tight knot and her face was drawn into a pained expression. “I don’t want you to leave, but…yes, I support them.” She took a few quivering breaths and continued. “Adam is lovely young man, and I’m happy for Kris.” Kris knew the effort that this was costing his mother and he felt his heart swell with love for her.

“I don’t mind it,” came uncle Matthew’s soft voice from the living room.

“Me neither,” said cousin Amanda, cradling little Freddie, who had stopped crying.

I knew it! I knew some of them were holding back!

Danny walked over, stood next to Adam and faced Silvia. Aunt Mabel crossed her arms and frowned in disapproval.

“I see. So, that’s how it is?” Kris’ grandma spat, breathing heavily through flared nostrils and looking at everyone haughtily. “After everything I’ve given this family, you are all going to sit there and side against me?”

Kris saw many of them squirm with guilt. He could feel it, too, bubbling up inside of him. No, that’s not fair. I’m not going to feel bad for being myself.

“None is siding against you, Grandma, they’re just being good Christians.” Silvia looked as if she’d been slapped in the face. “Adam was right, Jesus said that we should love everyone. I…still love you, even if you don’t love me back,” he said sadly.

Adam put his arm around Kris and pinned Silvia with an intense stare. “I’m sure your grandmother loves you, Kris.”

“I…of course I do, of course I love my grandson,” she said with wide eyes, her angry mask cracking a bit. “I’m a good Christian.”

“It’s settled then. No one is leaving,” said Neil abruptly. “We don’t all have to agree, but we can certainly have a nice evening together. Kim and Adam have created an incredible feast for us all.”

“But…but…” Silvia sputtered.

“Come on, dear,” said her husband Frank, taking her by the elbow and leading her into the dining room. A collective exhale floated around the room and gradually Kris’ relatives migrated to the long, festively arranged table.

Kim, Neil and Danny smiled at the couple and gave them a moment alone.

“Oh my god…oh my god,” Kris panted, gazing up at Adam in shock.

“Angel! You did it!” he said excitedly. “I’m sooooo proud of you!” He wrapped Kris up in a
gigantic hug and squeezed him tightly, lifting him off the ground about an inch.

Kris’ face stretched into a broad grin, his shock turning into relief as his toes dangled in the air. He nuzzled into Adam’s chest, feeling safe there. “I can’t believe it,” he said, trembling a little and breathing in Adam’s scent. It was a major triumph for Kris. Only another people pleaser would understand just how much of an accomplishment it was to push past the irrational fear that somehow the world would come to a screeching halt if someone important withdrew their love.

“I believe it. You’re a badass angel!” said Adam with fierce pride as he set Kris back on his feet.

Kris giggled. “Couldn’t have done it without you, baby…thank you,” he said, looking into Adam’s eyes adoringly.

“You did it all by yourself,” Adam assured him with a brief kiss to the lips. “Now let’s go eat. I made this amazing thing called candied yams.”

They were the last two to be seated at the table. Kim had set a place for them next to each other and across from some of Kris’ cousins including Emily, who winked at him and gave him the thumbs up. He smiled at her, ignoring a grumble from the end of the table that he knew belonged to his grandmother. It’s not going to be perfect, but at least I said my piece. And I’m here with Adam. No one is going to ask me if I’ve met any nice girls now!

“Shall we say grace?” Kris’ mom looked like she was still struggling quite a bit, sitting next to her mother and withstanding regular huffs of displeasure from the woman. Kris knew exactly how she felt, and it was difficult not to want to fix everything somehow, to make everyone happy, if that was even possible.

“May I?” questioned Neil. When there was no dissent, he bowed his head. Everyone copied him. Adam looked around the table and quickly followed suit, though he kept his eyes open and watched Kris peripherally. Neil cleared his throat and began.

“Loving Father, help us to remember the birth
of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and the worship of the wise men.
Close the door of hate and
open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift and
good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings, and teach us to
be merry with clear hearts.
May the Christmas morning make us happy
to be Thy children, and the Christmas evening
bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

“Amen,” they all chorused. Now that was about the true spirit of Christmas!

“That was lovely, dear,” said Kim, throwing a quick glance at her mother and sister as if she hoped they had listened closely to the prayer.
Silvia glowered and motioned to the beautiful ham in the center of the table. “I suppose you don’t eat pork?” she asked Adam grumpily.

“I do, actually,” he replied cheerily, “and it looks magnificent, Kim, you are such a gracious and talented host.”

She smiled genuinely at Adam and let her shoulders drop from her ears. “Thank you.”

That was so sweet. He must be able to tell how stressed she is.

Kris reached beneath the table surreptitiously and squeezed his boyfriend’s thigh.

“So, Adam,” said Kris’ uncle Matthew, “I take it you’re from Los Angeles?” His eyes darted to his mother briefly before refocusing across the table.

“I am,” Adam replied, “born and raised.”

“City of sin,” Silvia mumbled.

“Oh will you give it a rest!” cried cousin Amanda, throwing down her knife and fork and rolling her eyes. “Honestly! And that’s Las Vegas anyway,” she said with exasperation. Aunt Laura and her husband David chuckled into their napkins. “I, for one, am very glad to meet you,” Amanda said to Adam as she shifted little Freddie to the other side of her lap. Kris laughed inwardly, completely delighted to witness the effect his bravery was having on the rest of the family.

“Thank you, uh…”

“It’s Amanda,” she supplied.

Adam smiled and raised his glass to her and Matthew. Kim’s sister Mabel was obviously torn, wanting to be part of the group but still watching her mother warily. “Er, Kim, these candied yams are delicious,” she offered.

“Oh I’m so glad you like them! Adam made them from scratch, he’s an incredible cook. Why, he made half of the dishes on this table!”

Adam snorted at the look of surprise on Mabel’s face but turned it into a cough at once, not wanting to be rude. There were some appreciative nods by others who were enjoying the variety of excellent food including homemade mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, ambrosia salad, fried okra, and cornbread stuffing. When Kris’ grandma couldn’t find anything to complain about, she became silent and focused on her meal while almost everyone else started warming up to Adam and his natural charm.

At the far end of the table, however, Kris’ thirty-year-old cousin Jeffery was staring at the couple with something akin to disgust. Kris had grown used to his coldness over the years, but this new level of hostility sent shivers down his spine. Fortunately, Adam hadn’t noticed Jeffery yet because he was too busy with everyone at his end of the table.

Emily seemed to be openly smitten with Adam even though she knew he was gay. “I wish I could get my eyeliner to look that good,” she sighed dreamily at him. Kris laughed out loud, remembering how Adam had said that girls used to fall all over him in high school. He couldn’t blame Emily though. Anyone in their right mind can see how gorgeous he is. I’m such a lucky bastard.
“I can give you some pointers if you like,” Adam smiled at her and winked.

“Ooooh, really?” she said breathlessly.

“What line of work are you in, Adam?” asked David.

“I’m a singer,” he answered.

David nodded. “Not surprising that you and Kris met up, then. Do you go to the same college?”

“Nope. I’m not in school. I’ve been working in LA for a number of years now,” Adam said genially, but just then he caught Jeffery’s eye and froze in his chair. “Umm, I…could you excuse me, please?” He got up quickly and Kris followed him to the small half bathroom in the hallway. Adam closed the door behind them and leaned against the wall.

“Adam, are you okay?” Kris said with concern. “I’m sorry about Jeffery, he’s always been distant, but…”

He shook his head and pulled Kris to his chest. “The look on his face, it…it just reminded me, but it’s okay…” Adam trailed off, squeezing his eyes closed and hugging Kris tightly.

_Adam, are you okay?_ Kris thought. _I’m sorry about Jeffery, he’s always been distant, but…"

He shook his head and pulled Kris to his chest. “The look on his face, it…it just reminded me, but it’s okay…” Adam trailed off, squeezing his eyes closed and hugging Kris tightly.

Shit, I never even thought about Jeffery, I was so worried about Grandma…I didn’t think.

“No, I’m okay, it just took me by surprise. Can we stay here for a bit?”

“Of course. Do you want to go upstairs?”

Adam opened his eyes and heaved a great sigh. “It’s all right, I just need a minute to prepare myself before going back out there.” He sat down on the toilet and started breathing into his stomach evenly and deeply while holding on to Kris’ hands.

Kris circled his thumbs on the backs of Adam’s hands. “I’ll tell him to leave.”

“What? No,” Adam said, actually smiling a little, “you can’t kick your cousin out…you’re taking the badass angel thing too far,” he chuckled.

“Hmph. I’m not going to let him mess with you.”

“I don’t need your help!” Adam barked suddenly.

Kris dropped his hands, stung at the harsh tone. His eyes sparkled with tears and he backed away a few feet. “I…”

Adam sighed and pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes. “I’m sorry, Kris. Come back here.” He pulled Kris onto his lap and wrapped his arms around him. “I didn’t mean to snap at you like that.”

Kris sat there, wrestling with his feelings. He couldn’t help feeling hurt, but at the same time he knew Adam was right, and he thought about what Sheila had said to him that day in the emergency room. “It’s okay, I know I can’t fight your battles for you,” he said softly, wiping at his eyes.
“No, you can’t, but I shouldn’t have yelled. I know you’re just concerned about me.”

“Ugh…we’re still a bit of a mess sometimes, aren’t we?” sighed Kris.

“Yeah,” Adam agreed, resting his forehead on Kris’ back, “but it’s our mess.”

Kris smiled at that. *It is.* He turned around in Adam’s lap and straddled him. “Maybe I’ll yell back next time and then we can have makeup sex.” *That would be a first.* Kris couldn’t remember ever yelling at anyone before. *You yelled at Grandma tonight.*

Adam smirked. “We could have it right now.”

“Mmm, don’t tempt me, lover.”

“Seriously though,” Adam said, “I can take care of myself, okay? I…I want to handle this on my own. I need to.”

Kris nodded. “Okay.”

After a brief kiss, they returned to the table just as Kim was passing around what looked like glasses of whipped cream. “Everything all right, honey?” she asked Kris.

“Perfectly fine,” Adam piped up. “What is this delicious looking drink?” He sat down, looked purposefully at Jeffery and shot him a look that said, “fuck off or you’ll wish you’d never been born.” Jeffrey choked on a mouthful of food, his eyes widening in fear. The next second he dropped his gaze to his plate and started playing with his silverware.

*Take that!* Kris grinned at Adam, who looked pleased with himself.

“It’s called syllabub. We have it every Christmas,” Kim said.

Adam took a sip and smacked his lips. “Wow, this is excellent! What’s in it?”

“Cognac, sherry, sugar, lemon juice, nutmeg…and whipped cream, obviously,” she said.

*Mmm*, *whipped cream…yeah.* Kris sighed, remembering Thanksgiving with Adam.

Emily pouted. “Mine doesn’t have any alcohol,” she said in a forlorn voice. “Can I have a taste of yours, Adam?” she asked, batting her lashes at him.

“Absolutely not,” he laughed. “I don’t think your mother would approve.”

Whether out of disgust or fear, Jeffrey decided to leave after dinner. “Good riddance,” mumbled Amanda. “Oh, did I say that out loud?” she tittered with mock innocence.

Adam chuckled, looking just a little smug.

*He’s earned the right to be a bit cocky. See? He can manage.*

“Is it present time yet?” Kris’ little niece Jasmine asked her mother.

“Almost,” replied Amanda.
Once the table was cleared, the family gathered in the living room around the gigantic Christmas tree. The two men sat together leaning against the wall. Kris snuggled up to Adam and looked at everyone as if daring them to say anything about it. There were a few sniffs and grumbles here and there, but that was all. Pangs of rejection continued to stab him every time he glanced at his grandma, making him want to crawl onto her lap, take everything back and beg her to forgive him. I’ve got nothing to ask forgiveness for. It was hard to ignore the tugs of guilt, but he sat with the discomfort and focused on Adam instead. “I got you a present,” he whispered, “but you don’t get it until tomorrow.”

“Kris,” Adam said quietly, “you didn’t have to do that. I don’t even celebrate Christmas.”

“But I do. Plus, I didn’t get you anything for Chanukah.”

Adam kissed him on the temple. “I got you something, too.”

“Really?” Kris said gleefully. “Tomorrow is going to be awesome!”

Neil played Santa and walked around handing out gifts to everyone. Kris’ immediate family wouldn’t be exchanging presents until the next day, but Adam looked on as Kris received a small box full of guitar picks, the obligatory Christmas sweater, a bunch of CDs, several gift cards, a Bible…of course…and a new watch among other things from his relatives.

“We didn’t know you were coming,” said Aunt Laura to Adam apologetically, “or we would have…”

Adam waved a hand in the air. “I’ve got all the happiness I could want right here,” he said, hugging Kris to his side.

“That’s really sweet.” Laura smiled and turned to her husband. “Why couldn’t you have been more like that when we were dating?”

David rolled his eyes playfully. “Thanks a lot, Adam,” he smirked.

“No problem,” Adam snickered, eyes glinting.

“You are too much, baby,” sighed Kris contentedly. He couldn’t help but imagine what their future might look like together…more holidays, maybe their families meeting someday. That would be a trip. Nana Jane would cause enough ruckus all by herself. He smiled as Freddie crawled over to them and placed a chubby hand on Adam’s knee.

“Oh sorry about that,” said Amanda, hurrying over to grab her son, “he’s getting really mobile now.”

“Don’t worry about it, I love kids,” said Adam, letting the baby curl a fist around his finger.

Kris saw his mother staring at them with something like hope in her eyes, and he knew at once what she was thinking. She wants grandkids so bad. She had grieved a little when he told her he was gay, thinking that it meant he’d never have children. Who knows? One day at a time. He grinned at her and blew her a kiss.

When the presents were all exchanged and a fire was crackling in the fireplace, Neil got out his guitar and started strumming. “Adam,” will you sing for us?
Adam looked around the room. Some people were smiling encouragingly, others seemed merely curious, and a few including Grandma, frowned. “But he’s Jewish, what’s he going to do, sing in Hebrew?”

“Trust me, Silvia,” said Kris’ dad, “Adam has an incredible voice and I’m sure he knows Silent Night.” She continued to scowl quietly and got out her knitting.

“Go on, baby,” said Kris, “they’ve heard me sing a million times. Strut your stuff.” He winked.

“Alright then.” Adam stood up and went to stand next to Neil. “Give me a few chords so I know what key you’re in.”

Kris immediately missed Adam’s body heat, but he knew it would be worth it to see the looks on everyone’s faces when they heard him sing. Sure enough, as soon as Adam began, the room grew absolutely still and they all gazed at him raptly. Even Silvia put down her knitting needles, unable to ignore his beautiful voice. Kris held his little nephew on his lap and let it the sound wash over him. He glanced at his grandmother and saw her wipe at her eyes when she thought no one was looking. That voice can melt anyone.

Every single person clapped when he finished. Silvia brought her hands together once and resumed her knitting with a tiny sniffle. Flushed with praise, Adam beamed and thanked them before returning to Kris. “That was incredible, Adam!”

“Thank you,” he said, still blushing a bit. He caught Sylvia’s eye and smiled genuinely at her. The corner of her mouth quirked up before she went back to her knitting.

An hour later the house was emptying of relatives. Nearly everyone was shaking Adam’s hand as they left, repeating their amazement at his singing abilities and wishing him and Kris well. Emily sighed dramatically. “Hope to see you soon, Adam!” True, there were still a few who merely nodded at him on their way out, but…you can’t win them all.

Silvia and her husband Frank had their coats on and stood facing Adam and Kris. Grandpa strode forward and grasped Adam’s hand at once. “It was a pleasure, my boy,” he said, his voice raspy with age but kind. He hugged Kris extra hard and they exchanged a silent glance full of warmth.

“Well, I still don’t approve of this,” Silvia said, “but I won’t deny that you are an excellent cook and singer.”

“Thank you ma’am,” Adam said graciously.

“Kristopher, I hope that you will come around in time, but…” she shuffled up to him until they were face to face, “I do love you. Don’t ever think that I don’t.” She kissed him swiftly on the cheek and turned to Kris’ mom. Kim stood there resolutely, her lips drawn in a thin line and her eyes filled with pain. Silvia walked up to her daughter and patted her arm. “You, too.”

That’s the best we’re going to get, at least for now. But hearing those words from his grandmother made every muscle in Kris’ body relax. She loves me, even if she doesn’t agree...she loves me. He was exhausted and close to tears from all the emotions, and fell into Adam the minute everyone had left.

“I’m going to bring him upstairs,” Adam said to Kim.
She nodded and squeezed his arm affectionately. “Go take care of my boy.”

Kris thought that the trek to his bedroom was the longest one of his life. He stumbled out of his clothes and into pajamas with help, and at last Adam laid him down in the blankets and began caressing his face tenderly. “I’m so proud of you, angel,” he murmured.

“Me, too,” Kris replied yawning, his eyes drooping closed despite his efforts to keep them open.

“Go to sleep, lover,” Adam whispered, kissing him softly on the forehead.

“Hmm.”  

Tomorrow is going to be so much fun.

Chapter 33

Mmmmm...oh yeah...uh huh...right...there...Kris, yes baby...wait, wait...this...isn’t a dream...Adam’s eyes popped open to find Kris rubbing him in slow, firm circles through his pajama pants. “Merry Christmas, Adam,” his boyfriend said in a sultry tone, looking for all the world like a large cat stalking his prey. Not even his morning hair sticking up in all directions could ruin the effect.

Adam tried to respond, but the pleasure building steadily in his dick made him nearly incoherent. “Merry...Merry...” he managed to gasp before Kris’ hand suddenly slid beneath his black sweatpants and curled around his length. Adam gasped and groaned loudly, relishing in the repeated pressure up and down as Kris thumbed his pre-cum slicked head with every pass.

“Shhh, my parents might hear,” Kris whispered and pushed a pillow next to Adam’s head with his free hand.

Adam quickly pulled it over his face. He gripped deeply into the downy feathers and started moaning open-mouthed against the cotton when he felt soft lips close around his shaft, effectively banishing all thoughts from his brain. After only a minute of succumbing to that hot, sweet mouth, he let out a muffled shout and came hard down Kris’ throat, his entire body quaking with release. “Fucking...Merry...Christmas,” he panted after throwing the pillow aside.

Kris chuckled as he wiped the side of his hand across his mouth to catch a dribble of cum. He stuck out his tongue and licked his palm slowly while staring heatedly at Adam. “Mmmm, breakfast of champions.”

But before Kris could finish his ‘breakfast,’ Adam pounced and pinned him to the floor. “I don’t think Santa even has a list for a rabbit as naughty as you,” he said huskily, capturing Kris’ hands and trapping them above his head.

“How about one for a naughty tiger then?” suggested Kris, the fire in his eyes continuing to blaze as he began grinding his erection into Adam’s hip.

“A tiger are you? My, my, so feisty this morning,” Adam breathed, nibbling on Kris’ earlobe.

“It’s Christmas,” Kris replied with a shiver. He arched his neck and offered it up, but Adam drew back and barked out a laugh despite the overwhelming desire to tear his lover apart.
“And that makes you horny?” he chortled.

“Well, being around you makes me horny, so yeah…Christmas, Thanksgiving, Saturdays…pretty much all the time really,” he said seriously with those lust blown eyes that were making Adam’s dick throb back to life. “What are the chances of getting you hard again, because I’m dying for you to be inside me already.”

“I’m already there, you sexy beast, so prepare to be ravaged.” Adam sucked that delicious earlobe into his mouth again and bit down hard, deciding that Kris’ burgeoning self-confidence was ridiculously hot. *Yesterday probably helped a lot with that.* “You might want that pillow back, angel.”

Twenty minutes later Kris was walking down the stairs and wincing slightly with every step, still in his pajamas and grinning hugely. “Merry Christmas to me!” he sang.

“You are too cute to be allowed, baby,” Adam said, chuckling a bit as he followed Kris into the living room. Not comfortable appearing less than put together in front of the Allen’s, Adam had thrown on some clothes and had done his best with his hair and makeup before agreeing to go downstairs. “So, what’s the plan for today?”

“Christmas breakfast,” answered Kris cheerily, “and then we open presents and then we have a snowball fight and then we come in and have hot chocolate. And,” he said, waggling his eyebrows at Adam, “there’s a football game on later.” He sped up as they reached the kitchen and came to a sliding stop on his socked feet right next to his mother. “Merry Christmas, ma!” he said, throwing his arms around her tightly.


“Well Merry Christmas to you, too, honey! My, I don’t think I’ve seen you this happy on Christmas morning since you were in middle school!” Kim said, hugging him back and ruffling his hair.

*I’ll bet she hasn’t.* Adam thought about all the years that Kris had probably woken up after a night of pretending to be straight and enduring his relatives’ stupidity. *No wonder he’s so happy today…and frisky.*

“It’s Adam’s fault,” Kris said, smiling with complete innocence.

Kim turned to Adam and opened her arms. “Then thank you, Adam, for making my boy so happy.”

*It would be rude not to hug her…go on.* He still wasn’t used to being physically close with people other than his family, Kris and Alisan, but he was growing quite fond of the Allen’s. Trying to appear at ease, Adam walked forward and let Kim give him a brief squeeze. He patted her back. *This is nice. It kind of feels like hugging mom.* “It’s Kris’ fault, too,” he said, drawing away and sitting down at the table. He put a finger under Kris’ chin and lifted it. “You were so brave yesterday…you’re responsible for your own happiness.”

Kris sighed and seemed to melt into Adam’s eyes.

“Well aren’t you two the picture of love?” Neil declared jovially as he came into the kitchen through the patio door. He was carrying a stack of firewood and Danny was right behind him with another bundle.

“Oh man, are you guys going to start kissing at the table?” Danny teased as he stomped the snow from his boots. “Because seriously, I don’t know if I can handle all the lovey dovey this early in the morning.”
Kris wrinkled his nose at his brother and deliberately gave Adam a sloppy kiss right on the mouth. Neil chuckled and Danny rolled his eyes before heading into the living room with his father to deposit the wood. Before he let Kris go, Adam whispered in his ear, “everyone was already up, angel, looks like we didn’t need that pillow after all.”

Kris’ eyes sparkled mischievously as he replied quietly, “oh we still needed it. I know my ma would have heard me even from down here…the way you were pounding into me so hard…” He bit his bottom lip and squeezed his eyes closed, “mmmm…”

Speaking of hard… Adam gulped and sat back in his chair, quickly readjusted his pants and scooted in close to the table. He narrowed his eyes at Kris and mouthed silently, “You’re a bad rabbit.”

“You know you love it,” Kris mouthed back and winked.

I totally do.

Christmas breakfast was similar to all the others that Adam had spent with the Allen’s with one exception. In addition to the customary eggs, sausages, fruit and pancakes, there was a huge platter of frosted buns that Adam couldn’t wait to sample. They reminded him of the ones his mom used to make on his birthday when he was little. Knees bouncing with child-like impatience, he bowed his head for grace and listened to Kim say a lovely prayer of thanks. As soon as she was finished, Adam looked up quickly, waiting for someone to start passing around the food.

“They’re really good.”

“Huh?”

“You were staring at these,” Kris chuckled, picking up the platter from the middle of the table and offering it to Adam.

“Oh, um thanks,” he said, a bit embarrassed to be caught gawking like a kid at a yummy treat. But his discomfort was short lived. Yes, he could admit that he was starting to feel comfortable around Kris’ parents. It’s easy to see where he gets his sweet nature. As Adam took one of the sticky pastries, he considered how his years of social isolation had affected his life. All along he’d thought that it had been for his own good, a way to protect himself from pain, but now… “Mmm, oh my god, Kim, these are unbelievable!”

A pleased smile spread across her face at his compliment. “Thank you, Adam, I make them every year, and for special occasions.”

Adam swirled the melting sugar around with his tongue and continued to ponder while everyone dug in to the food. I’ve probably been missing out on meeting some potentially good people. Of course, not everyone in Kris’ family was someone that Adam would want to be around. That asswipe, Jeffery, can go fuck himself. But there had been several other relatives that Adam thought he wouldn’t mind seeing again, especially Amanda. Even Silvia, that crotchety old lady, had warmed up to him a little in the end. Although there had been many times yesterday when Adam had felt nervous, out of his element and surrounded by strangers trying to interact with him, he thought on the whole that he’d done a damn good job. Smiling and taking another pastry, he felt, well a bit more normal. The irony of his striving to be socially normal while Kris was doing everything he could not be boring or average made Adam laugh out loud.

“What’s so funny?” asked Kris.

“Nothing, nothing. Mind if I have a third?” I can afford it. I’ll just hit the gym extra hard when we
“Of course not, help yourself,” said Kim.

After breakfast, Danny was the first to hop to his feet. “Presents!”

“Oh! Right, umm, let me just run upstairs and get them,” said Adam, pushing back his chair and standing. Noting their expressions of surprise, he left the kitchen quickly before anyone could say a word about his decision to bring something for everyone. He dashed upstairs and heard Kris trotting up behind him.

“You didn’t have to get anything for my family, but it’s really sweet of you.”

Adam shrugged and opened his suitcase. He’d wrestled with idea for about a week leading up to this trip, gone over the pros and cons and agonized over what he might bring for them. That was nothing compared to how long I spent on Kris’ present though. The truth was that he just didn’t know the social protocol in these situations. He could have asked for help, but he’d been stubborn and wanted to work out his own feelings about what he should do. In the end he figured that it would be his way of showing appreciation for hosting him. Ahhh...there it is. Adam pulled out the plastic bag and turned to Kris. “Can we save ours for later, you know, in private?”

“Absolutely. I was going to ask you the same thing,” Kris responded.

Adam sighed in relief and hugged him, still feeling a bit jumpy.

“Are you okay?” Kris asked as he drew back, his brow furrowed in concern.

“Yep. It’s just…”

“New?”

“Yeah. But it’s good. I really like your family. I mean, your parents and Danny.”

“They like you, too. I knew that they would.” Kris cupped Adam’s face and pulled it down to his. “I can’t seem to keep my hands to myself today,” he smirked.

“I’m not complaining.” He pressed his lips softly to Kris’ mouth, loving the familiar texture and…

“Mmmm, I can taste those sticky buns.”

Kris giggled. “I’m not even going to go there,” he laughed. “Come on, they’re probably waiting for us.”

Adam grabbed his camera just before they left. It hadn’t been used in years. He’d brought it with him because he wanted memories, reminders of this time with Kris and his family.

“Took you guys long enough,” Danny said suspiciously. “I don’t even want to know what you were doing up there.”

“Get your mind out of the gutter, bro,” Kris snorted.

Adam walked over to the tree and quickly took the presents out of his bag, all three of them expertly wrapped in shiny silver paper. They looked professionally done with white ribbon tied around the packages and curled perfectly, only slightly bent from being packed in his suitcase. He remembered how meticulously he’d worked at it until they were right. Feeling self conscious, he hurried over to the couch with Kris and they snuggled up together.
A warm fire was lit in the fireplace, everyone was smiling and Adam felt like he was in a Christmas card photo. *This is really different than Chanukah.* He suddenly missed his family and their laughter, their open and adventurous spirits. *Maybe I’ll call them later.*

Okay, looks like this one is for Danny,” said Neil, “from your brother.”

Danny tore open the package and let out a whistle. “Wow, thanks man!” Inside the small box was a gold coin. Danny held it up and showed it to his mom and dad. “It’s the St. Michael coin! Oh, and look on the back, ‘Stay Safe, love from your brother Kris.’”

“St. Michael is the Patron Saint of Law Enforcement,” Kris explained to Adam. “Danny started training as a police officer this year.”

Adam remembered Kris telling him that his dad volunteered at the Sheriff’s Department. “That’s really cool. You’re such a sweet brother.”

“Yeah, thanks a lot, Kris.” Danny got up and gave his brother a hug.

As more gifts were exchanged, Adam could feel the tight closeness that the Allen’s shared. The gifts were thoughtful and obviously chosen with care. Kris gave his father a new wood working tool and his mother a chic and stylish apron. In return he’d received a hand carved set of bookends with music notes engraved in them, a very handsome sweater that looked like it would fit him perfectly, and a years subscription to ESPN magazine.

When Neil picked up one of the sparkling gifts, Adam’s stomach clenched nervously. “To Kim, from Adam,” Neil read from the tag.

“It’s so beautifully wrapped,” said Kim, “that it makes me not want to open it!” She undid each side carefully and saved the paper. Inside was a small gift box full of specialty items from Adam’s favorite local natural foods store. “Oh, this is wonderful!” she exclaimed, “I wouldn’t be able to find most of this here in Arkansas…thank you, Adam. That was very kind of you.”

He grinned broadly, feeling pleased that he’d done the right thing. “It’s my thanks for being such a wonderful host to me.”

She smiled. “Would you like a few pictures on your camera?”

“Yes, that’s really sweet of you to offer.” He handed her his camera and tried to ignore the occasional clicks, tried not to pose or worry about how he looked. Glancing at Kris all cute in his pajamas made it easier.

“This one is from all of us, Adam,” said Kris’ dad, handing him a large package.

“You shouldn’t have,” he mumbled, but smiled shyly at them all. He hadn’t expected this. “Do you know what it is?” he asked Kris.

“No idea,” he answered. “Come on, open it already!”

Adam ran a finger under the tape and pulled apart the checkered wrapping paper to reveal… “Oh my,” he gasped out loud and almost started laughing hysterically. He looked at Kris and tried not fall into a fit of giggles. “Look, Kris, a set of knives.”

Kris’ jaw dropped and he blushed scarlet.

“Kim, Neil…Danny, this is the most wonderful gift,” he said, his mouth twitching a little.
The Allen’s looked confusedly at Kris’ red face and Adam’s laughing eyes. “Well, Kris told me that you were a talented cook,” said Kim, “and we thought…”

“It’s perfect,” he assured them all, “my old set is starting to wear and I recognize the label…these are high quality knives. I can promise you that I will get a lot of good use out of them.” Oh yes I will.

“Thank you so much,” he managed sincerely enough that they all relaxed and smiled at him.

“You’ll have to check them on your way home though,” said Neil. “Make sure you don’t put them in your carry on or you might get arrested,” he chuckled.

Still highly amused, Adam set down the box and put his arm around Kris, who was squirming on the couch. “What’s the matter, angel,” he whispered into his ear, “thinking about all ways we can play with those?”

Kris pulled his t-shirt down over his pajama bottoms and scowled at Adam, but his face had all the fierceness of a Labrador puppy.

Only a few presents were left. Neil was thrilled with Adam’s gift, a box full of guitar accessories including extra strings, cleaner, a few picks and a capo. “How on earth did you know I played the guitar before you got here?” he asked, looking impressed.

Adam chuckled. “Kris told my whole family about the time he ran away from home and…”

“Took my guitar,” Neil finished, smiling at his son. “Such a rascal.”

Danny had been the hardest to shop for. Adam had a much easier time dealing with adults and children than he did with people closer to his own age, especially men. At last he’d gone with something that he would have bought for one of his college-aged cousins. He was banking on Danny being a music lover, too. “Fantastic, Adam! I think I’m addicted to iTunes, so this is perfect,” he said, showing the gift card to his parents.

Okay! Snowball fight time!” Kris chirped excitedly. He leapt up and took Adam by the hand. “Just let me change, Danny, and we’ll be ready.”

“What about you two?” asked Kim, “aren’t you going to exchange presents?”

“Later, ma, in private. We don’t want Danny’s eyes to get stuck from rolling them constantly,” he said over his shoulder as he led Adam upstairs.

“Umm, I’m not so sure about this,” said Adam once they were in Kris’ bedroom. “I think I’ll just watch or…maybe your mom needs help in the kitchen?”

“Don’t tell me you’ve never had a snowball fight before?” He stripped off his pajamas and threw on a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt.

“Helllooo, California boy here! Besides…” But Adam couldn’t think of a ‘besides.’ Something about it just feels weird.

“Hey, it’s all right,” said Kris soothingly when he saw Adam’s troubled face. “Me and Danny have been playing alone for years. Why don’t you just be my cheerleader?”

Adam puffed out a breath and relaxed his fists at his sides. “Thanks,” he nodded, “I promise that if you win I’ll give you a special prize,” he said, feeling less tense now.

“Oh I like the sound of that a hell of a lot.” They began to kiss passionately. Adam ran his hands
through Kris’ hair and walked him to the bed, secretly hoping that he would forget about his plans outside altogether. “You’re trying to distract me,” Kris smiled against Adam’s mouth.

“Damn, you figured me out.” He had almost made it to the bed. *Just a little further and I could have blown his mind.* Adam pecked him on the nose and stepped back. “I give in, let’s go.”

They bundled up and went into the back yard. Kris dragged a chair from the kitchen and set it up for Adam. Danny was already building his fortress. “Cheer me on, baby!” Kris said, grinning goofily and ran off into the snow.

*Just like a little kid. How can he be so cute one minute and so goddamn sexy the next?* Adam slapped his mittened hands together to keep them warm and tried to figure out why he wasn’t out there playing with Kris and Danny. *It’s not that I don’t like Danny. He seems to be really nice and all.* Adam shook his head, mystified at his own behavior.

“Ahahahaaa! Sucker!” Kris called from behind his little wall of snow.

Adam smiled as he watched the snowballs flying back and forth. “Go baby go! You show ‘em… woooooo!” he cheered loudly. Kris looked at him and grinned, but his lack of attention cost him a snowball in the chest. “That’s it! You’re in for it now!” he shouted playfully at Danny and started firing rapidly across the yard.

*It does look like fun. Why not…oh…* And there it was. He suddenly realized that joining the game would be a whole different level of interacting with Danny, who might as well be his peer. Physical competition, maybe aggression even if playful, possibly getting hurt on accident…it was fraught with complications for Adam. But this understanding somehow made him determined to do it because it was the normal thing to do and fuck if he was going to let a little discomfort get in his way. “Hey!” he called, getting up and running over to Kris’ side of the yard.

“Time out!” yelled Kris to Danny, who nodded and held back the snowball he’d been about to throw. “Is everything okay?” asked Kris.

“Yeah, I want to play.”

“You sure?”

“Yep. Tell me the rules.”

Kris beamed at him, obviously delighted that he had changed his mind. “Okay, no hitting below the belt or in the face, time outs whenever we call them, and no throwing when the other has his back turned.”

“That sounds pretty fair. But two against one?”

“Well you’re new at this, so I’m sure he won’t mind. Who cares if he does? Time in!” he yelled.

It was total mayhem and Adam couldn’t remember the last time he’d had more fun. Soon he’d perfected the art of making the perfect snowball and Danny didn’t stand a chance. It was aggressive and physical, but lighthearted at the same time. Adam laughed so hard that he had to call a time out to catch his breath at one point. “Did you see that? Did you see his face when I threw that curve ball?” He sat down behind the wall and held his stomach.

Kris sat down, chuckling, and kissed him on his chilly cheek. “You’re a natural! You should have played baseball with an arm like that.”
“Ugh, are you serious? No way, angel.”

“Hey! What are you guys doing over there?” Danny shouted.

Adam popped his head up over the snow barrier. “We’re having sex in the snow!” he called loudly and then doubled up in laughter, feeling free to just be. He plopped back down on his butt and laughed away any tension that had been in his body, not caring about a damn thing at the moment. Kris couldn’t help but join him and they laughed until their sides hurt even though there wasn’t anything particularly funny going on. It just felt good.

“You are not having sex,” said Danny, looking down at them over the wall.

Adam wiped at his eyes. “No,” he snickered.

Danny laughed under his breath. “Are we done then?”

“I think so,” said Kris, still chortling a bit. “I’m exhausted. Tell ma we’ll be in for hot cocoa in a few minutes.”

“Ahhhh,” Adam sighed, massaging his ribs. “That was fucking awesome!”

“You are so gorgeous when you laugh like that,” said Kris, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you laugh so hard.”

“It felt good. I’m so glad I decided to play!” His eyes were sparkling with mirth and carefree openness.

“Me, too. God, I’m so hot for you right now… you have no idea.”

He studied Kris for a moment and saw that same heat in his eyes from this morning. “Well I really don’t want to have sex in the snow, so how about we visit the tree house?” he said, feeling more and more aroused by the minute. He reached out to Kris, wanting to feel his skin but… “Damn these mittens!” he laughed.

Kris smiled and some of the urgency left his voice. “I have an idea. Let’s go have cocoa and lunch and then I really need a shower. Then we can exchange our presents in the tree house.”

“That sounds perfect.”

Nearly an hour later the two men were back outside, showered, full of leftover Christmas dinner and eager to share their special moment together. However, not once in all the time that he’d been in Arkansas was Adam as nervous as he was in the moments leading up to giving Kris his gift. *What if he doesn’t like it?* He’d spent weeks picking it out, ever since he knew he would be spending Christmas with Kris. Never in his entire life had Adam given a present to a boyfriend. *It’s not like he’s going to leave you if he doesn’t like it… chill Lambert.* Climbing the steps to their little love shack, Adam tried to push down his apprehension and just focus on being with Kris.

“You’re dad is such a genius,” he said, grateful for the heat inside.

Kris nodded as he took off his coat, scarf and gloves. “I know. But I never had this much fun in here when I was a kid,” he said, pulling the blankets out of the wooden chest and arranging them on the floor.

They settled into the middle of the blankets sitting cross-legged, knees touching. Each of them held a small box in their hand and it felt like a big moment. Adam’s heart sped up as they stared at each
other, the midday sun streaming in the little windows and casting its beams on them. *It's going to be fine.* “Can I give you yours first?” he asked, wanting to get it over with so he could focus on Kris’ present.

The box was wrapped in black paper that seemed to shimmer in the sun. Kris took it from Adam’s trembling hand. “I’m going to love it, baby. Relax,” he said, kissing Adam’s knuckles.

Adam nodded silently and held his breath as Kris took off the paper and opened the box.

“Oh Adam. Wow.” Kris picked up the pendant and held it up in the light. “It’s…so badass!” he laughed.

“Read the description,” Adam prompted.

Kris took up the little card inside the box and read it out loud. “Representing The Wild Child and No Limits, the Hazard pendant is a dual metal pendant that symbolizes the unrestricted and adventurous.” He looked up into Adam’s eyes with wonder. “This is perfect! This is like, totally what I want to be!”

Eeeeeeeeee! I know, angel! And you are that, you are a wild child. I mean, boring people are not into whips and knives, they don’t challenge their relatives and kick ass the way you do!”

Kris looked completely giddy as he examined the black and silver metal. The base layer was a basic cross shape and the top layer, laid over the cross, had four arrows pointing in the four cardinal directions. He turned over the card and continued to read. “This represents the freedom to move without restriction. The crescent shapes around the arrows resemble a hazard symbol, which has three crescents pointing outward around a central point. This symbol is used to indicate dangerous and high-risk areas.” He looked up again, eyes wide in excitement and a huge grin plastered on his face.

*That’s the look I was hoping for! YEAY!* Adam took the pendant on its leather necklace and clasped it around Kris’ neck.

“I really want to tackle you right now,” Kris said suddenly. “Please say it’s okay.”

“It’s okay,” Adam laughed, overwhelmed with joy that he’d picked the perfect gift for his courageous boyfriend. “Mmph!” In an instant he was bowled over and on his back, but there was nothing scary about it. Kris attacked his mouth and he responded with enthusiasm.

“I’m high-risk…I’m a wild child,” he said fiercely in between kisses. “You sure you can handle me?”

“I don’t know, I’ll have to be careful,” Adam teased.

They rolled around for a while, kissing, groping and grinding until Kris sat up abruptly. “Wait…wait, I want to give you mine,” he said through panting breaths.

“Okay, but then we are getting back to this. I’m so fucking turned on,” he gasped.

Returning to their cross-legged positions, they tried to compose themselves. Kris picked up the package he’d set down before hurling himself at Adam. He watched intently as Adam gently removed the red paper and opened the box.

“Angel! I mean *angel*…I…I…” It was too much for him to take in, and he began to sob, clutching the bracelet to his chest.
“Now you can always have your angel with you…oh baby, don’t cry!” Kris wrapped his arms around Adam and rocked him, making shushing sounds and stroking his hair. “I’m sorry, lover, I didn’t want to make you sad.”

“Kris…I’m not sad,” Adam choked out. He looked at the bracelet reverently and began to trace the tiny, red-winged angel etched into the silver with his finger. “I’m so happy, I don’t even know what to say. This is the sweetest, most thoughtful, most beautiful…I’m going to treasure it forever. Help me put it on.”

As he fastened the clasp around Adam’s wrist, Kris swallowed and gazed seriously at him. “I’m always with you, always in your heart, no matter what. If I’m ever not there and you miss me, just look at this and remember that, okay?”

Adam nodded and scrubbed at his eyes. “I’m never taking it off.” Never. He felt so in love that his heart was bursting with it. Staring into Kris’ eyes, Adam could suddenly imagine years and years with him, waking up every morning and seeing his beautiful face. I want him to move in with me. Well if you want that, you have to work hard for it. Yes, I’ll do it. I’ll get better and less needy. I have to do that for myself anyway. “I want you, angel…so bad, I’m fucking desperate for you right now.”

He was practically jumping out of his skin with need.

Kris leaned forward and cupped Adam’s face. “I want to lick you. I want to push my tongue right inside of you.”

“Oh god, Kris,” Adam whimpered, shuddering. There was no way he was going to refuse that offer. He leapt to his feet and began undressing, but Kris had other ideas and quickly stilled Adam’s hands so he could take over.

“Please…hurry,” Adam pleaded, frantically waving his hands at how slowly Kris was unbuttoning his pants.

“I’m going to unwrap you like a present, baby.” With a torturous pace, Kris divested Adam of his clothing piece by piece and kissed his freckled skin, brushing soft lips over his nipples, chest and shoulders. He sucked a nipple into his mouth and circled his tongue around it until it was a hard nub. Hot…so hot, oh my god. Adam stood there trembling with his eyes pinched closed, gasping as his dick sprang out from his briefs, engorged and leaking. “Kris…Kris…please…” He tried to stroke himself but his hand was gently pulled away.

Kris finished his task and pulled Adam down to the blankets. “On your hands and knees, lover,” he whispered.

Never had Adam been more eager to comply. I don’t fucking care that I’m being submissive. I want it. He positioned himself quickly and spread his long legs a bit. “Ohhh yes, angel…yes,” he moaned, anticipating the slick wetness and pressure when he felt his cheeks being pried open. Hot breath graced his puckered skin and he quivered all over. “Want it…want…” he panted. His fingers scrambled for purchase in the blankets as Kris began to lick, to bathe Adam’s tight ring of muscle with saliva. Adam bent down to his forearms and thrust his cheeks in the air. “Put it in me…Kris…please,” he begged. He heard Kris moan before spreading Adam wide apart. “Oh god…yes…”

Adam clenched his fingers and toes, his head reeling with the glorious sensation of Kris’ tongue sliding, pushing, and plundering him again and again. “Fuck…so good, so fucking…” He wanted it to go on forever, but his dick was aching for stimulation.

As if Kris could read his mind, he reached around and grasped Adam firmly. “Adam,” Kris suddenly rasped. “Need you.” He snatched up his pants, fished out a condom and a packet of lube
and tore them both open.

Adam whined at the loss of tongue and hand, but whipped around in the next heartbeat and climbed Kris like a tree, pushing his knees back until they touched the floor. “Give,” he puffed out and took the condom from Kris, rolled it on hurriedly and slicked himself up. “Shit,” he hissed as he sank into delicious tightness.

Skin slapping, mouths emitting the most loving and filthy sounds, balls contracting, fingers digging into each other’s flesh...they lost themselves in the heat of passion, Kris’ wild child pendant bouncing off his chest and Adam’s angel bracelet rattling as his arms shook with every thrust. Adam began to jerk off his lover and his thrusts became erratic. “Oh god...angel...angel!” As his climax surged and broke over him, Adam continued to tug at Kris until he came with a long, wailing cry. With his last bit of energy, he tried to catch the cum in his mouth, but his arms finally gave out and he collapsed on top of Kris, feeling completely turned inside out and spent. A bead of sweat dripped into his eye and stung it. He blinked and sucked huge gulps of air into his lungs, his naked, sweaty body glistening in the sun that was still pouring into the tree house. He felt himself rise and fall with every one of Kris’ breaths. “Am I...crushing you, angel?”

Kris made an incoherent sound and wrapped his limbs around Adam. “Stay,” he managed to get out.

Ten minutes later Adam finally rolled off and spooned around his boyfriend. “If sex was an Olympic sport...” Kris began.

“Yeah, we’d get the gold for sure,” Adam finished for him. “Pretty much the only sport I would play,” he chuckled.

“Speaking of sports...”

“I know. We’re probably missing kickoff right now,” Adam smirked, nuzzling Kris just behind his ear.

“Well, listen to you talking football,” Kris snickered. “But I don’t think I’m ready to move yet. Adam?” He rolled over and stared into clear blue eyes. “I feel like we just did something really big.”

“You mean besides blowing each other’s minds?” Adam teased.

“Yes, you goof,” Kris said, rolling his eyes.

“I’m kidding. I know what you’re saying and I feel the same way. I feel like we made some kind of promise, a commitment.”

“Me too, but I don’t know exactly what we promised each other. Do you?”

“Not really. Maybe just to keep loving each other no matter what happens.”

“Yeah. Merry Christmas, baby.”

“Merry Christmas, angel.”

Football
“Watching football with your dad and Danny isn’t nearly as much fun as watching it alone with you,” Adam whispered into Kris’ ear, “but you do look sensationaly fuckable right about now.”

Kris had that manic gleam in his eye that could only be brought on by the adrenaline of a good football game, and Adam knew how much awesome sex they would be having right now if they weren’t surrounded by other people.

“It’s almost half time,” Kris whispered back in a breathy, excited voice, “the Titans are getting crushed!” He whipped his head around to the TV in time to catch another big play and hollered his approval with Neil and Danny.

Adam blew out a breath that ruffled his bangs and slumped back into the couch, clearly bored. “I’m going to go call my mom,” he said, “come find me when it’s half time.”

“Okay,” Kris said, not really paying attention. “Oh damn you, Chargers! That was deliberate!” He turned to his dad. “How did they get away with that without a penalty!”

*He’s so hot like that…too bad there’s not a TV in the tree house. Adam climbed the steps to Kris’ bedroom and sat on the edge of the bed with his phone. “Hey mom, how’s it going?”*

“Hi sweetie! It’s so good to hear from you! Everything is fine here. How are you liking Arkansas?”

“Well Kris’ parents and his brother Danny are really great people. It’s cold here though and I kind of miss you and everyone.”

“We miss you, too, honey. When are you coming home?”

Adam laid back on the bed and put one arm behind his head. “We get back on the second. Neil must be really excited about moving.”

“He is. He already started packing, but he’s not moving until mid-January so you’ll be able to see him. Adam, have you been…okay out there?”

He knew what she meant. Everyone in his family knew that Adam had a hard time socially. “Yeah, actually, it’s been fine, mom. The Allen’s have been really sweet to me. I even had a snowball fight with Kris and Danny!” he said proudly.

“Did you really?” Her laugh was warm and comforting. It felt like a hug and Adam let the rich sound wash over him like a contented sigh.

“Yeah, I did. I…” Suddenly he heard the sound of feet pounding up the stairs and then Kris was at the doorway. Adam sucked in a breath and felt his jeans get tight at the look of raging heat in his lover’s eyes. Kris shut the door and started stalking towards him. “Gotta go mom talk to you later okay bye I love you.” He hung up and tossed the phone aside just in time to catch Kris when he leapt onto the bed.

“Only have ten minutes,” Kris said, fumbling at Adam’s belt buckle.

“Ten? I thought half time was longer…here let me…” Adam whipped his belt off and unbuttoned his
“Dad and Danny want to shoot the shit…told them I’d be back in ten.” He pulled down Adam’s jeans and stared hungrily at the growing bulge beneath his boxer briefs.

_Goddam!_ Adam licked his lips slowly, seductively and bucked up once into the air. “Suck me.”

“Fuck,” Kris growled, and clamped his mouth over Adam’s swelling cock.

_Yeah, I still love football._

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**Chapter 34**

Beads of condensation slid down the completely fogged up mirror in the upstairs bathroom and Adam wasn’t even done washing his hair yet. He’d awoken very early this morning from a wet dream that had shocked him enough that he couldn’t stay in bed. The sun was just beginning to rise when Adam had nearly jolted upright from the blankets, only managing not to because he didn’t want to disturb the warm body next to him. Kris was still sleeping peacefully curled up in their little love nest on the floor.

Adam massaged the Bed Head shampoo into his scalp slowly as he tried to process his dream. Even thinking about it made him semi-hard and he twined his fingers into his lathered hair painfully to avoid touching himself. _Maybe I’m going too fast, surrendering too much._ Somehow Adam knew that even if he’d never been traumatized that he would have ended up being the top in a relationship. It had been his first and natural instinct the first time he and Sam had sex. _But people, normal people in normal relationships…they must experiment with different things, right?_ He sighed and told himself to shut up with the ‘normal’ stuff already. You should just go with what feels good. _Well that’s not something that feels good. That is pain. Oh yeah? Felt pretty fucking nice in your dream, Lambert._ His dick had a mind of its own apparently, because it sprang to attention as if daring Adam not to grasp it. Kris, hovering over him, little drops of sweat collecting at his temples… Kris, gazing intensely at him with those beautiful brown eyes… Kris, thrusting his length in and out of Adam’s eager body… _fuck. Fucking fuck._ He squatted down and poured some body wash into his hand. _This is becoming a bad habit._ Over the last two months, Adam had discovered the joys of the male prostate courtesy of his own fingers. The first few times, he’d started out masturbating as he recalled one of his many times with Kris, but his imagination had run wild thinking about his lover’s calloused digits brushing against his pleasure spot. It was particularly enjoyable when the couple did it simultaneously during phone sex. Only one time had Adam’s brain taken him as far as bottoming, and fortunately his brother Neil had called and distracted him. But this dream… _Oh shit…ohhhhh…_ Adam chewed on his lip and pushed his middle finger deep inside himself, angling and crooking it just right until he found…_yessss._

Ten minutes later he was wiping the mirror with a towel so he could see to put his makeup on. _Maybe it’s not about sex. Maybe it’s about…something else…symbolic._ He snorted and thought about what Sheila would say. He could almost hear her calm voice, telling him that “it’s about trust,” he said out loud as stroked the angel on his bracelet, studying the tiny figure. _Where did he even find this?_ Adam had caught himself touching it unconsciously over the last few days whenever he felt nervous or uncomfortable, as if it were some kind of talisman of strength.
He continued to contemplate while applying his eyeliner meticulously. Even if the dream had been symbolic, Adam couldn’t help his body’s response to the idea. I’m not ready for that yet, I don’t care that I dreamt it. But maybe I’m ready for his finger. He shivered and his hand slipped. Great, now I look like a glammy clown.

“Kris, it’s time to get up, lover.” Adam brushed his hand across Kris’ smooth cheek, thinking how beautiful he was and wishing they could just snuggle in bed all day. “Baby,” he said a little louder, “you told me to wake you up.”

Kris’ eyes fluttered open and focused. “Mmmm, you look so pretty. Cuddle me?” He made grabby hands but Adam pulled away.

“You told me not to, remember? You wanted to get up right away so we could head out early.”

“Oh yeah,” Kris said with a pout. He stretched his arms over his head, exposing a generous portion of skin that Adam really wanted to kiss, but he licked his lips instead. Kris grinned slyly at that. “We could always go tomorrow.”

“Up to you. I’m more than happy to stay right here and show you just how sexy you are right now.”

“Your lips are shiny,” said Kris, looking a little helpless as he stared at Adam’s mouth.

“Lip gloss. The dry air here is killing me.”

Kris shook his head and rubbed his eyes. “No, no…we should go. You’re just so hard to resist sometimes…you’re like a Kris magnet.”

Adam chuckled and touched his shimmering mouth to Kris’ forehead. “I’m totally fine with that. So this lake we’re going to, it’s uh, not like a beach or anything, right?”

“No, not at all. It’s surrounded by trees and grass, well, snow at the moment.”

“And you can see to the other side of it? I mean I know we already went over this the other day, I’m just making sure.” He hated that he was asking these questions again, hated that he still felt he had to. You’re not damaged…you’re just taking care of yourself. What’s wrong with that? Adam felt ashamed anyway and started playing with his bracelet.

Kris sat up and squeezed his hand reassuringly. “We don’t have to go. It was just a suggestion.”

“I want to. It sounds really beautiful and it’s a special place to you.” It’s not the ocean, don’t worry… it won’t even smell like saltwater. The first time he had gone on a trip to the beach after his trauma, he’d suffered a truly horrific flashback and ended up in the psychiatric hospital. He avoided the ocean like the plague now, and when Sheila had told him all those years ago that smells were usually very strong triggers, he didn’t so much as go near the coast on a windy day. Adam looked up and saw that Kris had been watching him fidget with his Christmas present. “Sometimes it makes me feel calm,” he said with just a tinge of pink appearing on his cheeks.

“I’m glad,” Kris smiled and kissed the palm of Adam’s hand.

“Where did you find this anyway?”
“Well the bracelet was easy. I wanted it to be strong…it’s made out of titanium and that wasn’t too hard to find. But the angel…” Kris flushed a bit and scratched the back of his neck in that adorable way he did when he was nervous or embarrassed. “I looked and looked, but finally I had to work with a jeweler to have it custom engraved.”

“Wow.” Adam squinted at the fine details, loving how the angel’s head was bowed and his wings stretched out on either side.

“Yeah,” Kris continued, chuckling, “the guy kept getting frustrated with me because he just wasn’t getting it right, so I had to give him a detailed sketch of exactly how I wanted it to look.”

Adam snapped his head up and gazed at his boyfriend in wonder. “You drew this?”

“It’s nothing,” Kris said, picking at a thread on one of the blankets.

“It’s not nothing, Kris. I didn’t know you could draw.”

“I can’t. I mean I’ve never done anything like that before. I just had this picture in my head and it had to be perfect.”

“You should do it some more, I bet you’d be amazing!”

“I don’t know. I’ll think about it, but right now I need to shower and eat breakfast so we can get out of here before I lose my willpower and beg you to have your way with me.”

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Lake Conway was located just a few miles southeast of the Allen house. A beautiful 6,700 acre reservoir famous for fishing and boating, the lake and its surrounding parks were usually packed with fisherman, weekend tourists and people just enjoying nature. In the winter however, it was quiet and serene. The only activities were the early morning die-hards trying to catch bass or catfish and the occasional outings made by occupants of the grand houses on the edges of the lake.

With approximately 52 miles of shoreline, Lake Conway had many parking lots and boat ramps, but only the locals used the small gravel roads that accessed the northern end, and it was down one of these paths that Neil Allen’s pick up truck was kicking up clouds of dust as it approached the lake.

“It looks like a postcard.”

“Yeah,” said Kris as he threw the truck into second gear, “I really love it this time of year…so peaceful.” The morning sun was fully up now and it glinted off the shallow water, reflecting the surrounding trees that were dripping melted ice like rain onto the snow below.

Gravel crunched under the tires as Kris brought the vehicle to a stop and put it in park. “Well here we are,” he said with a wide grin.

Adam gazed at the large body of water that stretched out for miles, but he could see the other side of it, the houses that looked tiny from here and the distant tress. He smiled at Kris, opened the door and hopped out of the truck. A cool morning wind made him pull his hat down more snugly, but the air
was invigorating and fresh and he breathed it in deeply through his nose. “Ahhhh, yep. I like it.” Not even a trace of saltwater and no sand. He swept Kris up into a tight hug and nuzzled the lower part of his chilly red ear that wasn’t covered by fleece.

After sharing a brief kiss, they walked around to the back of the truck and pulled out a shovel, a tarp, a bundle of blankets and a large woven basket from the cab storage box. “I can’t believe we’re going to have a picnic in the snow,” Adam chuckled.

“Genius, right?” Kris beamed. “It’s the perfect time...we’re completely alone out here.”

Adam shook his head, still chortling, and helped Kris carry their supplies down a narrow trail that he would never have found on his own. They picked their way carefully along the bank, making little clouds appear as their hot breath met the cold air until they came upon a group of giant evergreen trees that formed a nearly complete circle.

“Ohh,” Adam breathed out as Kris led him through the six-foot gap in the trees.

“Awesome, isn’t it?”

“Totally.”

Kris stopped in his tracks in the middle of the circle and let out a soft sigh. “So many memories,” he said in a distant voice.

“Good ones I hope,” Adam said, thinking about all the carved hearts in Kris’ tree house.

Kris shrugged. “It’s a mixed bag. That’s why I wanted to bring you here...new memories.” He smiled, set down the basket and hefted the shovel in his hands. They took turns working until they had cleared enough snow to set up their little picnic, first the tarp, then three blankets and finally the basket of food.

“This is so beautiful,” said Adam after sitting down and looking around for a minute. He didn’t consider himself to be an outdoorsy sort of person, but that didn’t stop him from appreciating nature’s gifts. The green giants stood side-by-side reaching high into the clear blue sky, their tips swaying gently in the soft breeze. The two men had a perfect view of the lake through the break in the circle. It’s kind of romantic. Didn’t he say he used to bring guys here to kiss in secret? Adam pulled Kris down to the blankets and propped up onto one elbow, hovering over him. “Wanna make out?” he whispered.

“Absolutely,” Kris murmured as he wrapped his arms around Adam, who fit their mouths together at once.

A lone crow cawed overhead, the wind gushed into their private world, and Adam heard a bell sounding somewhere, but none of this disturbed their slow, languid kisses. It was almost as if they were tasting each other for the very first time, exploring all the ridges and textures, the heat of their mouths a delicious contrast to the cool air. After about ten minutes of this Adam took off his left mitten, moved his hand down in between Kris’ legs and began rubbing him steadily.

Kris moaned and arched into the touch. “Adam,” he breathed, “bite me.”

Adam considered him, all bundled up in a sweater, winter coat, scarf and a hat. “It might get a little cold, angel.”
“I don’t care…please,” Kris whined as he swiveled his groin repeatedly into Adam’s hand.

_Hmmm. I think I know the perfect place._ With his other hand he unzipped Kris’ jacket completely and pushed up his sweater and t-shirt a few inches to reveal his warm flesh. Kris shivered and continued to get himself off, grinding upwards and groaning with ever increasing volume. Adam bent down to Kris’ torso and licked him right below his ribcage. Goosebumps broke out on his skin and he gasped. “Bite…”

After a few more passes with his tongue, Adam took that perfect skin in between his teeth and bit down, gently.

“Harder,” Kris panted.

Adam increased the pace of his left hand as he clamped down his jaws with more pressure, drawing a stream of “yes yes yes” from his boyfriend’s mouth. He worried his teeth into Kris’ flesh harder and harder until he thought he might draw blood, his hand stroking feverishly now to bring his lover over the edge.

Suddenly Kris’ entire body tensed and then he banged his head against the ground and arched his body upwards, calling out Adam’s name in the still, crisp air and causing a host of sparrows to flee from the nearest tree. Large puffs of vapor issued from his mouth as he breathed deeply into his lungs.

Adam laved the wound several times before pulling Kris’ sweater back down and zipping up his coat. “How was that?” he asked softly, trying to ignore his own throbbing member and just concentrating on the beautiful features of the man before him.

Kris was staring dreamily up into the blue. “Amazing,” he said in awe. “But…” he turned his gaze to focus on Adam, “…what about you?”

Adam shook his head. “I’m fine. That was just for you, love.” It was true. For some reason he couldn’t understand, Adam was perfectly happy to just give in this moment. _That’s got to be a first._

“You are not fine,” Kris chuckled, “let me take care of you.” He started to sit up but Adam pushed him back down.

“No, angel, I’m serious.”

Kris frowned. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, now lie back with me and enjoy the beauty.”

“Okay. Thank you, baby,” Kris said as they snuggled up and took in the scenery. Gradually Adam’s physical discomfort faded away and he felt a little proud for managing to be selfless. _That felt good, like, really good to just give him what he wanted._ “Angel?”

“Mmm?”

“Tell me why you like pain.” Adam understood it in theory, but he wanted to know what it did for Kris.
“I don’t know. Adrenaline? Endorphins? Maybe both…I think…” he paused, wiggling deeper into Adam’s arms, “…it’s also about feeling vulnerable and safe, the high of giving up control.”

_Huh._ The idea that surrendering control could be so pleasurable used to be foreign to Adam, but all the times he’d let Kris be dominant had been incredibly hot. _Yeah, but none of it involved pain._ But _what about that time he bit you on your first night together in the club room…remember that? It hurt but it turned you on._ _Hmph._ Aside from that then, he only had horrific memories associated with pain, but he couldn’t deny that Kris’ fetish for it was unbelievably arousing. Adam loved being in control, and it was even sexier with Kris because of the amount of trust they shared. He’d collected all those kink objects in his closet over the years as a way to experiment with domination because it made him feel powerful, but this thing with Kris felt entirely different; he did it out of love, not fear or anger.

“You still with me?” asked Kris.

“Yeah, just thinking.”

“What about?”

“How much I love making you happy.”

They soaked in the peace around them until Adam’s stomach began to grumble. “Picnic time, I think,” he said, massaging his belly.

“Sounds good, and I could really use a couple of napkins to uh, clean up,” Kris smirked.

“Here.” Adam tossed him a few and tried not to get excited by the sight of him digging his hand down his pants.

Kris tossed the soiled napkins into a plastic bag they’d brought for garbage and eagerly removed a thermos from the basket. “Mmmm, ma’s homemade hot chocolate,” he said with a sigh. They spread out their lunch of ham sandwiches, cut up veggies, some barley soup and the last two slices of a pumpkin pie Kim had made the day before. As they ate, Adam thought about their plans for New Year’s Eve that night. It would be the first time in many years that he wouldn’t be out clubbing with Alisan and Neil to bring in the new year. “It’ll be nice, just being with your family tonight,” he said sincerely.

“I’ve been thinking about that,” said Kris, “and I really don’t want to stay home.”

“No? What do you want to do?” Adam asked and took a bite of sandwich.

“I want to…” Kris looked at him mischievously before continuing. “I want to go to a gay bar and get wasted.”

“What?” Adam laughed, almost choking on his food. He swallowed and goggled at Kris. “You’re kidding me, right?”

“Nope!” Kris replied with a wide grin. “I’ve never been to one before and I’ve never really been drunk. Come on, Adam, it’ll be so much fun!”

“Uh…” _Remember Halloween? No way is that going to happen again._ “I really don’t want to get drunk in public, Kris. Plus, are there even any gay bars here?”
Kris’ face fell, making him look like a little boy who’d been denied dessert. “Yeah, there’s one,” he said, poking at his carrot sticks glumly.

*Shit, well it’s your fault, getting him that pendant. He wants to be wild.* “How about a compromise? We’ll go to the bar but we’ll stay sober. Then after the count down we can come home and drink, safely…and,” he said as inspiration struck, “we can play that fun little game of yours.”

“The dice game?” Kris asked, perking up when Adam nodded. “Yes! Awesome!” he exclaimed, clapping his hands excitedly. “I’ll turn the heat on in the tree house before we leave so it’ll be nice and warm for us when we come home.”

*Phew. Quick thinking, Lambert.*

After lunch they returned everything to the truck and spent some time walking around the lake, holding hands and chatting about their New Year’s resolutions. Kris wanted to finish his demo and get it heard by the right people. “And I want to be bolder this year,” he said with a firm nod, “try new things…figure out who I am and not be afraid to show it…to show you.”

Adam squeezed his hand and had no doubt that Kris would be successful. “You’ll do it, and I’ll love whoever you are.”

Kris smiled at him. “What about you?”

“Well, I’m hoping to finish my album, too. I’ve already got a contact who’s waiting to hear it.” He stopped walking and looked out over the water, swinging their joined hands a little and watching the trees sway. “I’ve always dreamed of being famous.”

“If that’s what you want, then I’m sure it’ll happen,” Kris said encouragingly.

*Maybe. If I can overcome the fear of everyone knowing my personal business.* He sighed and started moving again. “I’m going to get a job and move somewhere with more parking,” he said, glancing over at Kris and winking.

“Amen to that,” Kris chuckled.

Suddenly the wind picked up, causing the water to rush into the bank. Adam tensed at the sound, briefly imagining the waves of the ocean that had witnessed his pain. He stomped his feet into the ground a few times, shook it off and continued speaking determinedly. “But mostly, I want to get better, I mean emotionally…for me, for you...” Adam came to a halt and turned to face Kris. “For us, angel,” he said, gazing into brown eyes and feeling hope for the future.

Kris took off one glove and stroked Adam’s cheek lovingly. “For us.”

***

At nine o’clock that night, the couple was almost ready to leave for the only gay bar in town. Adam was nearly done with his makeup and Kris was sitting on the bathroom counter, watching him
intently. “Can I have some?”

“What, eye shadow?” Adam asked as he swiped his upper lid with sparkling blue.

“Yeah.”

*It’s just one surprise after another with him these days.* He smiled fondly at his boyfriend. “How about we start you off with some eyeliner?”

Twenty minutes later they headed downstairs and were just on their way out the door. “Kris, honey, are you…wearing makeup?”

Kris looked at his mom, sitting there in her rocking chair and doing a crossword puzzle. “Um… yeah?” He fondled his necklace and squared his jaw. “Yeah,” he said more confidently.

“Oh. Well, have a good time then,” she said, looking uncertain of what else to say.

The two men left, chuckling at the expression on her face and bumping hips as they made their way to Kim’s sedan.

“Well fuck me!” Adam said in surprise, taking in the men of all shapes and ages crowded inside the bar. *Who knew a small town like this would have so many?* Dressed in everything from casual jeans to spandex and leather, the men wouldn’t have looked out of place in some of the less outlandish bars Adam had frequented in L.A.

Kris was wearing a grin the size of the sky. He looked around excitedly at the festive decorations and the spinning, sparkling ball and started nodding to the music that was pumping out onto the dance floor. “Come on!” He grabbed Adam by the hand and led him into the crowd.

*So he wants to dance, does he?* As soon as they found a spot, Adam pulled their bodies together tightly, cupped his hands around Kris’ perfect ass and started gyrating their hips to the beat. “Feel it, baby, feel the music…move with me.”

“I feel it alright,” said Kris a bit breathily as he shoved his hands into Adam’s back pockets and stared into his eyes. “Shiny,” he said so softly that Adam almost didn’t hear him.

“I think I’ll start wearing lip gloss all the time if it’s going to make you look at me that way,” he said gruffly, bending his head down for a kiss.

“Kris? Kris Allen?”

Kris turned his head and saw a young man with blonde hair ogling at him and Adam.

“Yeah? Oh! Steve, wow…hey man!” said Kris, blushing just a tad.

*He’s probably never been seen in a gay bar.* Adam gripped Kris’ ass harder and smirked at the man.

“Hey…h-hey there,” said Steve, looking Adam up and down and swallowing.

Kris followed Steve’s eyes and he smiled smugly. “This is my boyfriend, Adam.”

“P-pleasure,” he stuttered, unable to stop gawping at the tall, gorgeous man groping Kris.
“We played football together in high school,” Kris supplied, laughing a little and winking at Adam.

“Mmm, nice to meet you, Steve. Now if you’ll excuse us…” He couldn’t help but put on a bit of a show as he resumed his mission to kiss his sexy angel.

The blond haired man gasped and a tiny moan escaped his lips. “I’ll just…well…see you later, Kris,” he said in a strained voice and moved away.

“You’re so bad,” Kris panted after Adam had finished kissing him within an inch of his life.

“I’m so, so good, lover.” He joined their hands above their heads and then slithered down Kris’ body to his bulging cock and mouthed it before snaking his way back up. Kris had his head thrown back and moaned deep in his throat. “God, you’re so sexy…I could take you right here,” Adam said huskily.

“I’m definitely considering the possibility,” Kris said with equal heat, “but I think all the guys in here might pass out if they saw you doing that…look around, baby…”

Adam glanced around and saw many pairs of lust filled eyes directed at him. “I could care less,” he said and continued to paw at Kris possessively as they danced and ground their bodies together, lost in the music and passion.

At the end of the fourth song, they went to the bar for some water. “Thank you,” Kris said to Adam after taking a few gulps.

“What for?”

“For helping me feel confident out there.”

Adam brushed his lips to Kris’ ear. “They’re not all staring at me, you know.”

Kris grinned at that and puffed out his chest a bit before strutting back to the dance floor with Adam in tow. Exactly like a proud peacock.

By the time midnight was approaching, the sexual tension between them was off the charts and it was all Adam could do not to drag Kris to the bathroom and fuck his brains out. As it was, they were plastered together, hands all over each other…kissing, necking and thrusting to the beat. They barely noticed how much they were inspiring other people to get down and dirty, none of whom had the balls to interrupt the two hot men to see if they might be open to switching partners for a song or two.

“Okay, we’ve got ten minutes until the ball drops!” came the DJ’s voice over the speakers. “Now I don’t know if you all noticed, but the entire ceiling is decorated with mistletoe, so I want to see lots of tongue action going on,” he boomed and then pointed to Kris and Adam, “just like this smoking couple we’ve been jerking off to all evening.” The crowd cheered and laughed when Adam dipped Kris dramatically and planted a hot kiss on his lips. “Glasses of champagne are coming around, folks!”

When Adam stood back up, he saw Steve standing in the corner, staring and pulling at his shirt collar. Adam waved and blew him a kiss, just to mess with him.

Kris draped himself all over Adam’s body as if he were intoxicated. “So cruel,” he breathed hotly into his ear.
“Five! Four! Three! Two! One! Happy New Year!!!!” everyone shouted as the glittering disco ball fell to the ground and stopped just inches from the floor.

Adam and Kris faced each other, both holding a plastic flute of champagne and grinning from ear to ear. “Happy New Year, angel.”

“Happy New Year, baby.” They clinked their glasses and drank deeply.

All around them people were kissing, but the couple just stared into each other’s eyes giddily, pulses racing and their breath coming hot and heavy. Suddenly Kris threw his goblet to the ground and leapt forward into the air. Adam had no choice but to toss his cup, too, so he could catch him. *Fesity!* They latched their mouths together as Adam spun them around a few times. “Who needs alcohol,” Kris laughed after they stopped spinning, “I’m drunk on you!”

Adam chuckled, walked them to a nearby wall and crushed Kris into it, kissing him fiercely. “I can’t wait much longer…I want you.”

“Then let’s get out of here and go home,” he replied hoarsely.

“I don’t think either of us are clear headed enough to drive right now…I know I’m not.”

In the end, Adam did indeed drag his sexy boyfriend to the bathroom where he fucked him mercilessly up against the stall door and made him curse so badly that it would have made a sailor blush.

“Bye, Steve,” Adam said, wiggling his fingers at him as they left the bar twenty minutes later.

They stopped at a liquor store on the way home and picked up a bottle of Hornitos Sauza tequila. “We’ll need a few more things if we want to do this right,” said Adam as they got back into the car. Although he did not normally drink in public, Adam knew his alcohol. “Salt, a lime, shot glasses, some water and some snacks.

“We’ve got all that at home.”

“Tell me again why you want to get drunk?”

“Because I never have. I mean yeah, I drink beer and wine, but I always stop after I get tipsy.”

Adam shook his head but understood what Kris was doing. He remembered trying out everything when he was younger and could imagine that Kris had been too busy attempting to be the perfect son. They crept through the house quietly so as not disturb the Allen’s (Danny had gone out to his own party), and stocked up in the kitchen before going out to their little sex shack. Kris almost forgot his dice at the last minute and tiptoed upstairs to get them.

“Have you ever had tequila before?” Adam asked as he took out the blankets and dragged the wooden chest into the middle of the tree house floor. He used one of his new knives to slice the lime into wedges and saw Kris eying the gleaming metal. *There’s no way we’re doing that unless we’re one hundred percent sober.*

“Nope.”
“Okay, well this is pretty decent stuff for the price…it’s smooth and it won’t make you choke. I can handle about six shots before I pass out, but we’ll go easy since it’s your first time. If we eat a bit and drink a bunch of water in between, we won’t feel as sick and we might even avoid hangovers altogether.”

Kris nodded. “How about we alternate shots and rolling the dice?” he suggested, pulling them out of his pocket.

“Sounds about perfect.” Yeah, I’m definitely on board with this. Adam felt completely safe getting wasted with Kris. He had no secrets anymore and his trust in him was absolute. He opened a bag of corn chips and dumped some salsa into a bowl, then set up the two shot glasses and the saltshaker. “Ready?” Adam asked as he poured the shots.

“Yeah.” Kris eyes were shining with anticipation and Adam thought it was devastatingly cute and sexy at the same time.

“Alright, what you do first is lick the back of your hand right here,” he said and then demonstrated, quickly running his tongue across the skin in between his thumb and index finger. “Add a sprinkle of salt and lick it off, then you drink the whole shot all at once. After that you suck on the lime…it balances the taste…I’ll go first.” Kris watched attentively as Adam did it all in quick succession… lick, drink, slam, suck. “Ahhh, not bad,” he said as he felt the alcohol heating his body.

“Okay, my turn.” Kris copied Adam, though not as smoothly. “Whoa,” he blurted out after sucking on the lemon, his face screwed up tightly. “It’s bitter and it burns a little but…mmm, now it’s starting to taste kind of sweet,” he said, smacking his lips.

“Good,” Adam smiled, “how do you feel?”

“Warm. Let’s play.” Kris rolled the dice on the floor. They landed on ‘nibble’ and ‘above waste.’ He leered at Adam. “I am so glad I picked this up.”

“I’ve been wondering about that, you sneaky little rabbit, where did you get this game?”

“A sex shop,” he answered, waggling his eyebrows.

“You went into a sex shop!” That is something we’re going to have to do someday.

“Uh huh, now be quiet because I’m gonna nibble your neck. I know…no biting.” He crawled over to Adam and began to nuzzle the base of his throat, mouthing the skin with just a touch of teeth.

Adam arched his neck tried to get Kris to sit on his lap, but to no avail.

“Your turn,” said Kris, sitting back.

“Suck and wildcard.” Best game ever. “Now just what part of that delicious body should I suck?” Kris shivered. “I think…” Adam said, inching his hand towards Kris’ belt buckle, “…I’ll go for…yes…” He grabbed Kris’ finger and plunged it into his mouth, eyes sparkling with mischief.

“Ohhh…you, devil, you,” Kris groaned as Adam swirled his tongue and sucked, tasting a bit of salt and lime juice.

“Gotcha, angel. Here, have some water.” They both took a few swigs before moving onto another
round.

Kris did better with his second shot, whipping his head back to take it all in and slamming down the little glass. “Yeah…yeah…” he said in a way that Adam could tell he was getting pretty buzzed. “Gimme those dice, baby.” Kiss and lips were next. This time he crawled right into Adam’s lap and straddled him. He licked into Adam’s mouth, kissing him deeply and then sucked on his tongue like it was a dick, hallowing his cheeks until Adam couldn’t take it anymore.

“Fuck,” he puffed, “get back over there if you want to keep playing.”

Kris grinned, looking satisfied, and sat on the floor waiting for Adam to take his turn.

“Fondle above waist. Hmmm…take your shirt off.” Kris almost tore the seams in his haste to comply and had to catch himself not to fall over. “Such an eager rabbit,” Adam smirked, scooting over next to him. He took a nipple in between his thumb and forefinger and started to squeeze and roll it until it was a hard peak…then both hands were busy pinching and rubbing while Kris bit his lip hard and bucked up several times.

“Adam,” he moaned.

“Next round, gorgeous.”

After the third shot, Adam was definitely feeling relaxed and a little hazy. Kris, who weighed less and was newer to this sort of drinking, was starting to slur his words. *I wonder what Kris Allen says when he loses his filter?*

“Give,” Kris giggled, holding his hand out none too steadily.

“You’re cute,” said Adam after giving him the six-sided dice. He popped a tortilla chip into his mouth and leaned back on his hands.

“Mmmm…two wildcards. Heyyy, that means I can do whaddever I want.”

Adam chuckled. “I’m all yours, lover.”

“Good, cause I wanna suck youuu.”

*No complaints here!* “I think you might need a hand,” he said, smiling at Kris’ face screwed up in concentration as he tried to undo Adam’s jeans with fingers that didn’t seem to work. Adam stood up and wobbled a little before removing his boots and stripping off his pants and underwear. He sat back down on the blankets and began to stroke himself, thinking that asking Kris to finger him would probably have to wait until they got back to L.A. *It’s better that way, being in my own apartment.* He was both relieved and little disappointed.

“Heyy, thas mine!” Kris said indignantly, watching Adam masturbate with a completely serious face that made Adam have to bite back a laugh. His hilarity was short lived, however, because as soon as Kris took him in, Adam flopped back onto the ground and just felt, letting his body succumb to the alcohol and the sensational moisture and pressure of Kris’ lips.

“Itsso big…almos doesn fit…”

“Oh my god, Kris!” Adam exclaimed, bursting out in laughter and sitting up at once. “Talk about a
mood killer,” he snorted. “Lemme have my turn now…mmmm…I like…touch below waist.” But Kris couldn’t keep his hands to himself and they ended up face to face on their knees jerking each other off and exchanging sloppy kisses.

After coming messily and licking their fingers clean, they drank some more water and downed their fourth glass of tequila, which seemed to put Adam close to the edge. It had been a while since he’d had this much. “You’re the…prettiest boy…in the whooollle world!” he said, stretching his arms above his head.

Kris had successfully reached his goal of getting wasted. He watched Adam’s hands go up in the air and then started gazing at the ceiling as if it were the most incredible thing he’d ever seen. Adam snuck another shot while Kris wasn’t looking and dropped the tumbler.

The sound startled Kris and he tried to focus on Adam. “Nuh uh…thas you…” he responded belatedly, poking Adam in the chest and then looking at his finger with wide eyes. “Itssall fuzzy.”

“Yer fuzzy.”

For some reason that sent Kris into a fit of giggles and he fell over, rolling around on the ground and coming to a stop on his back. He squinted up at Adam. “Some day…’m gonna marry you.”

Adam nodded as if this weren’t at all unexpected. “Then we’ll hava baby…hmmm…we need a girl fer that,” he finished logically.

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Ewwww. Nooo, we’ll jus…go get one.”

Adam shook his head slowly side to side a few times, marveling at how everything seemed to blur together as he did so. “We can’t jus get one Krissofer…we hafta adop it ‘n stuff,” he said like he was explaining something to a small child. He fell back onto the floor next to Kris.

“Yeah, ’n we hafta getta dog.”

“I don like ‘em…too much hairrr,” Adam said, scrunching up his nose in distaste.

“Mmmm…we kin getta…a…one with no hair.”

“Wha? They don make ‘em like that,” Adam giggled.

“Uh huh…I seen one once…itwuz…Mesican…” Kris shook his head and tried again. “Mecisan…no, noo…Mex…i…can. Yeah. An it kin be…Fifi.”

“Fifi? Feeeefeeeee?” Adam doubled up in laughter, snorting and holding his stomach as he rolled onto his side and cackled so hard that tears began to stream down his face.

“Wuz wrong with Fifi?” Kris asked, furrowing his brows and looking wounded. “Yer mean.”

“No ‘m not…I luv you.” Adam sat up, his head wobbling, and wiped at his eyes. “We kin getta Fifi dog…come on…I gotta peee.”

They helped each other up and stumbled out into the cold, Adam naked from the waist down and Kris bare-chested with his fly open. Giggling and shivering, they stuck their dicks through the slats in the wooden railing and pissed onto the ground. After they were done, they hurried back inside the
best they could without tripping and collapsed into a drunken heap onto the floor.

“Yer my faverit,” said Adam as they tried to snuggle their floppy limbs together.

“Mmhm…yer mine, too.”

Morning After

A shaft of sunlight shone through the tree house window and landed on an upturned glass, causing a mini rainbow to appear on the wall and one beam of white light to shoot directly onto Kris Allen’s closed eyelid. Bright orange blazed in his mind before he opened his eyes, yelped and threw an arm over his face.

“Wazza matter?” came a groggy voice from the warm body draped over him.

“Mmph.” Kris smacked his lips and slowly lowered his arm, making sure to block the evil ray of light. He raised his head an inch off the ground to survey his surroundings, but a sharp pain at the base of his skull made him abandon this foolish notion. “Ugh, you said drinking water would help.”

“Should’ve,” murmured Adam sleepily, curling his limbs around Kris like he was hugging a body pillow. “I feel all right…want me to go get you some Tylenol?”

Kris’ headache felt better just hearing his lover’s offer. “It’s all right, it’s not that bad,” he said, stroking the outside of Adam’s thigh and making him shudder.

“Mmmm, that feels so good.” Adam nuzzled behind Kris’ ear and nipped at his throat. “So, how’s my wild child this morning?” he asked, a hint of amusement in his voice.

Kris smiled and was about to respond when something tickled the back of his morning-fogged brain. *Oh my god. Oh. My. God. Did I really tell him I wanted to marry him?* “Err.” He turned his head so he could see Adam’s expression, wondering if he remembered their ‘conversation’ from last night.

“Yes,” Adam said sincerely when their eyes met.

“Huh?”

“I accept your proposal of marriage,” he whispered, reaching out and tenderly stroking Kris’ cheekbone with his thumb.

Kris stared at Adam’s serious face and began to panic, his heart thumping wildly. *But…but…we were drunk…surely he doesn’t think…he can’t be…oh shit… “I…um…”* He gulped and tried to make his eyes less owl-like.
The corner of Adam’s mouth twitched a fraction.

Wait a minute…wait. Kris studied him closer and saw that his eyes were twinkling. “You…you…you’re not…”

Adam’s lips quivered and he pressed them together as his body began to shake with suppressed mirth.

I’m going to kill him! “You dork!” Kris puffed, pushing his boyfriend’s shoulder playfully and feeling immensely relieved.

Rich laughter bubbled up and out of Adam’s mouth and he buried his face in Kris’ neck, chortling as he hugged him tightly. “So how soon can we go dog shopping?”

“Shit,” he groaned, “you remember that, too?

“I want a Fifi Mexican dog so bad now, you have no idea,” Adam giggled.

“Why do I have the feeling that I’m never going to live that down?”

Chapter 35

“That is so awesome, baby.” Kris worked his chopsticks around the last piece of salmon sushi and plopped it into his mouth, chewing quickly because his lunch break was almost over.

“I know right? Sheila was so proud of me and she thinks I’m making really good progress!” came Adam’s excited voice over the phone.

Kris swallowed his food and chuckled to himself. He sounds just like a kid who got his first A plus on a math test. “You are, Adam. I’m proud of you, too.”

“Thanks. I really wish I could see you tonight, but I know you have class and I think I’ll get together with Ali for dinner.”

“Tell her I said hi,” said Kris, wiping his mouth. “Listen, I’ve got to go, but I’ll call you when I get home from class, okay?”

“Sounds good. I love you, Kris.”

“Love you, too, gorgeous.” He hung up and brought his empty sushi box to the trash bin, weaving in and out of the other people crowding the food court and nearly colliding with a stout woman who had her head buried in a book. The mall was not usually this packed on Monday afternoons, but the after Christmas sales seemed to be drawing in the masses like bees to a wild geranium flower.

As he made his way back to Macy’s, Kris thought about how glad he was that Adam appeared to be making renewed efforts to be less needy since they’d returned from Arkansas two days ago. It wasn’t that he didn’t treasure every moment with his boyfriend, he just understood the need for balance if
they ever wanted to live together successfully.

*Which I do…badly.* After being in constant contact with each other for two solid weeks, Kris was already missing Adam terribly. Last night he’d lain awake for hours until finally dozing off cuddling two pillows and a scrunched up blanket, but even that hadn’t been enough. Without Adam’s warm body next to him, his sleep had been fitful at best. *It’s like going through withdrawal.* Although he knew it was good for them to be apart sometimes, that didn’t make it suck any less.

He checked his watch as he walked up to his counter to relieve his co-worker. *Right on time.* Kris neither loved nor hated his job. To him, it was simply work that paid the bills. True, this time of year seemed to be a special kind of torture designed just to irritate him, but generally it wasn’t that bad. He was actually happy that it was busy that afternoon because it made the time go by faster. The quicker he was done, the sooner he’d get to class and then home to talk to Adam.

As the hours passed, he had no time to think about much of anything other than how to best help his customers, and when his phone buzzed in his back pocket, he was right in the middle of assisting a gentleman who was plainly in a hurry. *Shit. Whoever it is, I’ll just have to call them back later.* Kris wasn’t allowed to talk on the phone at work anyway. “Yes, sir, I’m very sorry that we don’t have this sweater in black. Would you like me to order it for you?”

“No, no, I don’t have the time for that now. I’ll just take these other ones then, and please be quick about it.”

Kris’ phone vibrated again, which made him slightly uneasy for some reason. There weren’t many people who called him aside from his family, Matt, and Adam, and they usually just left him a message if he didn’t pick up the first time. “Yes, of course,” Kris said to the man in front of him, swiftly folding the sweaters and putting them in a bag. A third buzzing made his stomach drop and a chill ran up his spine. *Something’s wrong.* “Here you are, sir, thank you for shopping at Macy’s and have a nice day.” He practically shoved the receipt at the man and turned around, whipping his phone out of his pocket to see who’d been calling him.

*Adam….oh god….oh god…please let everything be okay!* Starting to panic, Kris surveyed the store and saw that a customer was on her way to his counter. *Damn it!* He stood there momentarily paralyzed, terrified that something was horribly wrong with Adam, and made a hasty decision. “I’m sorry, ma’am, but this station will be closed for a few minutes. Please use the one in the accessories department,” he said none to steadily to the approaching woman, who nodded and walked away.

His phone was silent as he jogged to the back of the store. *What does that mean? Why isn’t he calling again? Oh my god…* Kris’ nerves were completely frazzled by the time he reached the staff room. He pressed number one on his speed dial and started pacing. *Pick up, pick up, pick up…*

A broken, crying, and desperate sounding voice finally answered. “Kris…”

“Adam! Oh my god, baby, are you okay? What’s going on? Where are you?”

“Please…m-make them g-go away…” Adam sobbed, a choking, pitiful sound that sent Kris’ fear right through the roof.

“Is someone hurting you? Adam, where are you? Please, tell me what’s happening!”

“M-make them…g-go away…p-please, angel…”
Tears sprung to Kris’ eyes at the pain he heard in his lover’s voice. “Are you having a flashback?” But all that came back were more wracking cries that just tore mercilessly at Kris’ heart. “Baby, where are you? Please tell me so I can come get you.” He scrubbed at his face and tried to stay calm despite every inch of his body screaming at him to freak out. “Where are--”

“The beach,” Adam whimpered, and then the line went dead.

“Fuck! Shit shit SHIT!” Kris shouted at the empty room. He tried calling Adam again but there was no response this time. “Fuck! He could be anywhere! There’s so many beaches…oh god…” And then it hit him. No, he wouldn’t…why on earth would he go there? But he had no time to ponder that. Fingers trembling, he scrolled on his phone until he found Alisan’s contact info and pressed the call button. “Ali, thank god. Quick, tell me how to find the beach where Adam was assaulted.”


“I think Adam went there. He just called me and said he was at a beach…Ali, please! Just tell me okay…hurry! He’s crying and I don’t know what’s happening,” Kris said loudly as hot tears spilled from his eyes and trickled down his cheeks.

“Damn. Why would he…never mind. Kris, this is serious. The last time Adam went to a beach he ended up at a psychiatric hospital. We have to get there fast and we might even have to call an ambulance when we find him. It’s this little place in Santa Monica, an unmarked private beach…you won’t find it without my help.”

“Well then help me!” he pleaded.

Alisan’s voice was firm. “Try not to panic. Get in your car and put me on speaker. I’ll talk you there as I’m driving to meet you.”

“But…but…what if he’s not there? He didn’t say it was that beach. Ali, what if we can’t find him? What if he wandered off somewhere and--”

“What did I say, Kris? You need to stay calm, you hear me? All we can do is look for him where we think he might be.”

“I’m trying, Ali…okay, okay…I’m going. I’ll call you when I’m on the road.” Kris was normally composed in a crisis, but not knowing exactly what was going on or if they would even find Adam…it was driving him insane. He would call the police if he was in danger, wouldn’t he? That thought did nothing to comfort Kris as he ran back into the store.

“Matt,” he puffed when he reached the shoe department, “I have to go. It’s an emergency.”

“Kris, what the--”

“There’s no time! I’ll explain later. Tell Rick I had to leave and it was an emergency.” He left Matt standing there looking stunned and raced out to his car. He tried Adam’s phone one more time before calling Alisan but all he got was voicemail. Maybe he can’t answer. Maybe he’s hurt somehow. No, don’t think about that! Oh god, why did he go to a beach? What if he has to go to the hospital again?

Fifteen minutes later Kris was attempting to ignore his rattling heart and the sound of Adam’s broken voice crying in his ears, desperately concentrating as he listened to Alisan give directions. After a
few more turns he interrupted her. “Ali, I see it! I’m pulling over now.”

“Oh, I’m about five minutes behind you. I’ll get there as quick as I can.”

“Wait, wait! Don’t hang up…I need to see if he’s here!”

He screeched the car to a halt on the side of the road, grabbed his phone and jumped out of the car without bothering to lock it. A low metal railing spanned the entrance to the beach and he vaulted over it and dashed onto the sand. “I don’t see him, Ali…fuck!” Kris whipped his head around in all directions but all he saw was an empty vista of shoreline. “He’s not…wait…I think…” A small shape in the distance near the water caught his eye and he sprinted towards it until he recognized a very familiar body lying on the ground. Oh no…please let him be okay! “It’s him…I see him, veer left when you get here.” With that he shoved his phone in his pocket and tore across the open space separating him from the love of his life. How long ago did he call me? Minutes? An hour? It seemed like eternity to Kris as he sped along, squinting to protect his eyes from the tiny golden grains that peppered his face, positive that he was running through a field of molasses instead of sand.

“Adam! Adam!” he called out as got closer to the crumpled form, but there was no sign of movement. Clutching at a stitch in his side, Kris stumbled the last few steps and collapsed to the ground next to Adam, who was lying on his side in a fetal position and muttering to himself. “Oh my god…baby, I found you…” Kris scooped him up and cradled his upper body. “I’ve got you…I’ve got you now…thank god you’re okay.”

Adam’s face was distorted with pain and red from prolonged crying. “I’m n-not okay…I’ll n-never be okay,” he began to wail in earnest, throwing his arms around Kris, his entire body trembling like a leaf.

“Baby…my sweet Adam,” Kris said, blinking back tears and crushing Adam to his chest, “why did you come here? Shhh…it’s okay, I’ve got you now.” Kris heard approaching footsteps and looked up to see Alisan running towards them, panting and almost falling over in her haste to get there.

“I’ll never be ok-k…ay,” Adam continued to sob loudly, “n-never…”

“Of course you will…it’s going to be all right now…shhhh.” Kris rocked him and squeezed him tight, pouring all of his love into the embrace, but Adam would not be soothed. He just kept on repeating himself and wept as if he were in mourning. What happened to him? Why did he come here? Why won’t he calm down? The questions kept reeling through Kris’ mind, and now that he knew that Adam was physically safe, he began to worry about his mental state.

“Kris…is he…okay?” Alisan arrived and dropped to the ground, her chest heaving with effort.

“I don’t know…he keeps saying the same thing and he won’t calm down.” He looked at her nervously, a new kind of fear spreading through his body. “Should we call someone?” Kris was hesitant to suggest this because he knew Adam would not want to go to the hospital. But what if it’s the best thing for him?

Alisan surveyed Adam for a moment. “Puppy,” she called out over his wails, “listen to me now, it’s your Ali. Adam, look at me.”

Adam showed no response that he’d heard her and curled in on himself in Kris’ arms, quaking all over and shaking his head. “N-never b-be okay…”
Finally Alisan sat back and sighed. “I think I better call the crisis line, Kris. I’ll tell them what’s going on and we’ll see what they say to do.” She got up and walked a few feet away before pulling out her phone and dialing.

“Baby…baby…I’ve got you…come on, my love, it’s all right,” Kris murmured, stroking his boyfriend’s tear stained face, absorbing his shuddering sobs and feeling utterly helpless. Kris didn’t know what else to do except wait and hold Adam tightly. He spotted a black phone on the sand, picked it up with one hand and tried to turn it on. Dead battery.

After a few minutes Alisan returned. “They connected me to the police so they could track my phone location. Kris, they’re sending an ambulance.” She knelt down and ran her fingers through Adam’s hair, gazing sadly at him. “The crisis worker said she would meet us at the emergency room to evaluate him. We should try to get him closer to the road.”

Kris nodded. “Up you go, baby…Ali, help me…he’s practically dead weight.”

Gradually they brought him to his feet between them and started moving him forward, but it was slow going. Adam hung his head and continued to cry, tears plopping down onto the sand, and stumbled along supported by Kris and Alisan on either side. As they approached the sidewalk, Kris saw the red and white truck coming down the street and was thankful that there was no siren sounding. With difficulty they managed to get him over the rail just as the ambulance arrived.

Suddenly Adam looked up. “Nooooooo!” he screamed, eyes wide in horror. “Noooo…noooo!” He tried to wrench his body away from Alisan and Kris and it was all they could do to hold on to him. Two paramedics hopped out of the truck and moved toward the three of them. “Noooo!” Adam bellowed again, scrabbling madly at the hands clutching his arms. “Don’t make me go back! Don’t make me…please!”

Adam’s terrified pleading carved right through Kris’ heart like a knife to a tender steak. “Maybe we should just take him home, Ali, this isn’t right…he’s so scared!” It was becoming nearly impossible to contain the tall, stronger man who seemed determined to escape.

“He needs to be evaluated… please don’t make this any harder.” She grabbed Adam by the chin and spoke in a steady, even voice. “Puppy, we’re just going to the emergency room, that’s all. It’s okay.”

“Alright now, son,” said one of the men calmly, “we’re just going to take a ride, come on now.” But Adam was having none of it. With an almighty effort, he twisted away from Alisan and Kris and ran into the street. The paramedics were too quick for him however, and managed to catch him before he got a few feet away.

“Noooo! Kris! Angel! Don’t let them take me!” he yelled, writhing and kicking against his captors. “If you love me, don’t let them take me away! PLEASE!”

“I’m right here, baby! I’m coming with you!” Kris called out, furiously wiping at his eyes. It was one of the worst moments of his life. The guilt and fear crashed down like a fifty ton weight, splintering his bones and flattening his insides as he watched Adam being manhandled into the back of the ambulance. “Don’t hurt him!”

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Kris lurched forward and started to climb into the truck.

“Are you family?” asked one of the men, holding out a hand to stop him.

“He’s my boyfriend and I’m coming with him!” Kris stated firmly.

The paramedic took in Kris’ wild looking eyes and trembling hands. “Maybe you’d better just follow us.”

“Absolutely not!” He took a few deep breaths and tried to compose himself. “Please,” he said more calmly, “he’s terrified and he needs me.” Kris could still hear Adam’s pitiful cries and pleas to be released coming from inside the ambulance.

“Oh jesus, they restrained him! Baby…I’m here…I’m right here, okay?” He sat down on a platform next to the stretcher and pushed Adam’s hair out of his face. “Shhhh, it’s going to be all right.”

“Angel…you let them…please, I don’t want to…” he whimpered, tugging on the black straps around his wrists and ankles and looking like the saddest creature Kris had ever laid eyes on.

“Why did you restrain him?” he asked the paramedic, unable to keep the bite out of his voice.

“It’s standard procedure when a patient is getting physical like that or tries to run. We need to keep him calm and safe,” the man said tonelessly as he wrote on his clipboard.

Kris turned back to Adam, willing himself not to burst into tears at the sight of his courageous man lying there helplessly. “We’re just going to the emergency room…just to talk to someone to see if you’re okay. It’s all right, my love.” But it wasn’t all right at all. He was an accomplice, aiding and abetting in bringing Adam to a place he feared. It didn’t matter that he was following the advice of the crisis people and Alisan; Kris still felt responsible.

“I’m n-not okay…why did you let them, angel…w-why?” Adam choked out, not realizing that he had already answered his own question. Suddenly he tucked his chin and gazed down at himself. “I can’t see my bracelet! W-where is it?” he asked with wide, panicking eyes.

“It’s right here,” Kris replied soothingly as he moved the wrist restraint a few inches to expose the silver. He looks like a child, so scared, so fragile! Kris was starting to understand that he would not be able to have a rational conversation with Adam while he was in this state. All he could do was comfort him until they got to the emergency room. It was taking so much energy to stay strong but surprisingly, he found that he could. Although still wracked with pain and guilt, Kris dug down deep inside and found the courage and love to withstand it all for the moment. This is how it is. I can handle it…I have to. I might have to again someday. Resolutely, he pushed back against the crushing weight and rolled his shoulders a few times.

Alisan poked her head into the ambulance briefly. Her face was strained, but she’d obviously been through this before and that made Kris feel just a tad bit better about what they were doing. “I’ll meet you there,” she said to him, shoving her hair behind her ears. “Puppy, I’m calling your mom and dad.”
Adam wasn’t paying attention, however, and started repeating himself again, now whispering through little hiccupping sobs. “Never be okay…”

Alisan frowned and reached in to squeeze Kris’ arm reassuringly before walking back to her car.

“What’s your name, son?” the paramedic asked when the truck started moving.

“It’s Adam, Adam Lambert,” Kris supplied for him.

He nodded and wrote the name down. “And you are?”

“Kris,” he said as he stroked Adam’s face lovingly, wishing his finger were a magic wand that could caress all the pain away.

“Kris, can you tell me what happened out there?”

“I…he…” How much should I tell him? “I was at work and he called me from the beach, crying. I don’t know why he went there, but when I found him he was really upset.”

“Does he have a history of mental health problems?” Scratch, scratch went the pen on the clipboard, squeaking a little in the man’s gloved hand.

Kris hadn’t expected this; he’d just wanted to be with Adam. “I don’t think it’s my place to say…”

The paramedic chewed on the end of his pen for a second, seeming to consider Kris’ words, and wrote some more. “How old is he?”

“Twenty seven.”

“Fine…all fine. We’ll be arriving in about fifteen minutes and I’ll let them take it from there,” he sighed.

In that short time Kris did his best to comfort Adam, scooting as close to the stretcher as possible and murmuring words of assurance and love. His heart felt bound up and twisted every time he gazed at that broken, tear-swollen face and he began pressing soft kisses to Adam’s forehead, cheeks and muttering mouth. “Love…it’s going to be okay…” He cleared his throat and looked up. “Do you have a warm cloth or something…he’s got sand on his face and…” Kris couldn’t finish the request because his bottom lip was starting to quiver.

A flash of sympathy crossed the paramedic’s features and he nodded, got up and tore open a packet. “This will have to do I’m afraid,” he said gently, handing Kris a cool, moist towelette.

As he wiped away the streaks of eyeliner and sand stuck on by tears, Kris wondered for the hundredth time what had possessed Adam to go to the beach. *Stubborn, foolish…why did he push himself like that? He must have known he wasn’t ready. “My sweet man,” he whispered, “you’re trying too hard.”*

Adam was transported inside the emergency room through the ambulance entrance still strapped to the stretcher, and when he saw where they were, he started to cry loudly again. “Don’t w-want to…no…angel…please…”

Kris held Adam’s hand, feeling like a traitor as he walked next to the cart, its wheels chirping over
the tiled floor. “I’m right here, Adam,” he said calmly even as he sniffed and surreptitiously dragged his forearm across his eyes. *I hope he doesn’t get mad at me later.* Kris knew it was a distinct possibility that after Adam was less frightened, he might feel upset and even betrayed. *Best not to think about that right now.*

“Young man,” said the paramedic, bending over and staring straight into Adam’s eyes, “I’m going to let you up now. Can you be calm for me?”

“Take them off…please,” he whimpered with trembling lips, feebly pulling at his bonds.

“I will, but I want you to sit right here on this stretcher and not go anywhere. If you can’t do that, I’ll have to put the restraints back on. Deal?”

Adam nodded a fraction. “Please,” he begged in a crumpled voice.

Once he was free, Adam sat up and immediately reached out for Kris, who stood in front of him and caught his leaning body. “Alright now…Alright…” he crooned, rubbing Adam’s back slowly and rhythmically with both hands as if they could make it all better. Never before had he been so desperate to fix everything, but he knew he had to leave it to the professionals right now.

“Don’t leave me,” Adam croaked, stroking his bracelet as he hugged Kris tightly.

“I won’t, baby. I love you and I’m not going anywhere…angel is here.”

“You must be Adam,” a woman in turquoise scrubs said with a tired smile as she approached them. “I need to ask you a few questions and then a nurse is going to take your temperature and blood pressure, okay?” She ruffled through the papers in her hand and pulled a pen from behind her ear.

Adam sighed, sounding defeated as if he knew the drill, but he did not release Kris. The woman asked for his full name, birth date and insurance information. “In my back pocket…my wallet.” Arms still around Adam, Kris pulled out the wallet with difficulty and removed the insurance card. The staff person took it and copied the information to her form.

“I need you to sign this consent for treatment, Adam.”

“I…I don’t want to go upstairs.” He squeezed Kris even harder and buried his face in Kris’ neck, sniffling and coughing a few times. *Upstairs? Maybe there’s a mental health part of this hospital. I bet he’s been here before.* Kris didn’t care that his neck was wet; he wasn’t letting go.

“If you know what’s upstairs then you know I’m only asking you to sign this for emergency room treatment…right? Nothing is going to happen until you talk to the crisis worker, okay?” Adam lifted his head and reached out one hand to scrawl his name at the bottom of the paper before falling back into Kris and sobbing. “D-don’t want to go…upstairs…”

“Shhhh, baby, I’ve got you. Let’s just wait and see what happens.” *What if he has to be admitted? Will I be allowed to stay with him?*

“Okay, now I’m going to get the nurse for you. Just sit right here with Kris.”

When the nurse came she brought the news that Alisan and Leila were in the waiting room asking to come back to see Adam. “Is that okay? Do you want to see them?”
Surprisingly, Adam shook his head no.

“Alright,” she said in a friendly tone. “That’s fine. Now please sit back so I can take your vitals.” But Adam just stuck his arm out and refused to be separated from Kris. “Are you taking any medications?”

“No.” Kris remembered how excited Adam had been when Sheila said he wouldn’t have to take any after all. Will that change now?

Afterwards, the nurse found a room for him on the far side of the emergency department and Kris helped her get Adam inside and onto the bed. “The crisis worker should be here any minute,” said the woman before leaving.

Kris nodded, feeling out of his element and wishing that Alisan and Leila were there. He lay down next to his lover and held him, kissed the base of his neck and murmured into his ear. “I love you, baby, I love you. I’m not going anywhere and we’re going to get through this together, okay?” He meant it. Not once in this whole ordeal had Kris’ devotion wavered in the slightest, even though he saw clearly now just how much farther Adam had to go in his recovery. By this time, Adam had stopped crying and just lay still, silently clutching at Kris’ arms around him.

The crisis worker was a short, slim woman who looked to be in her early forties. She was dressed professionally in slacks and a button down shirt and had her graying hair pulled back in a tight bun. She introduced herself as Sophia, pulled up a metal chair and sat in it a few feet from Adam’s bedside. Out of respect, Kris tried to sit up to shake her had, but Adam tensed and sucked in a sharp breath. “Stay…please…” he rasped.

“It’s perfectly fine,” Sophia said kindly and then looked over her paperwork. “Adam, something tells me that you’ve been through this before. Is that right?”

Adam didn’t answer her. He snuffled and pushed his face into the pillow. “I don’t want to go upstairs.”

“I’m sure you don’t. I need to ask you some questions though, okay?” When he still didn’t respond, she began anyway. “Can you tell me what happened on the beach?” Silence. “Adam,” she said patiently, “I can’t help you if you don’t talk to me. What happened?”

“I…don’t want to talk about it. Please…don’t make me,” he said with a shudder.

“Alright, how about some yes or no questions. Did someone hurt you today?”

“No,” he replied softly.

“Did you hurt anyone today?” Adam shook his head. “Did you hurt yourself today?” No again. “Good…good. Do you feel like hurting yourself now, Adam?” she asked gently.

Kris recalled Sheila asking this very same question in a different emergency room after Sam had escaped, and he dearly hoped that Adam’s answer would be the same. His chest tightened painfully as he waited, praying to god that the beautiful man in his arms didn’t feel that desperate.

“Adam?” Sophia asked again.

Please say no…please say no.
Adam took a deep breath and wiggled back into Kris. “No.”

Kris let out the air in his lungs and pressed his forehead to Adam’s back, tears leaking from his eyes in relief.

Sophia smiled. “I’m glad to hear that. You’re doing a wonderful job, Adam,” she said genuinely. “Can you tell me how you feel right now?”

“Sad.” Such a small, simple word, and yet it carried enough force to knock the wind out of Kris.

The worker leaned forward a bit and made eye contact with Adam. “Why are you sad?”

“Because…I’ll…never be better and then…” But he couldn’t continue as his chest began to heave with sobs again.

Sophia pressed on. “Then what, Adam?”

“He won’t m-move in with me…he w-won’t want me.”

She craned her neck so she could meet Kris’ eyes. “Does he mean you?”

Kris nodded and tried to keep it together. “But he’s wrong. I love him and I’ll always want him, no matter what.”

“Did you hear him, Adam? Did you hear what he said?”

Adam just cried, seemingly convinced of his inability to ‘get better.’

“Are you seeing a therapist?” Again no answer. “She, or he, may be helpful here. If I can get some information, it will help me a lot in making a decision.”

“D-don’t want to go upstairs.” A baby bird would be fiercer than the tall man decked out in black lying there, shaking and scared.

“Yes, I know that, and I don’t want to send you up there against your will. But I need some more information, either from your therapist, from your boyfriend or your family.”

“He…he can say, he can tell you.”

“Okay.” Sophia looked at Kris questioningly. “Kris, is it?” she asked after checking her paperwork. “Please tell me what happened today.”

Kris repeated what he’d said to the paramedic, hoping that Adam would show some sign if was uncomfortable with any of it.

“Is he in therapy?”

“Yes, every week.”

She made a check mark on her form and crossed her legs. “And who are his supports?”
“He’s got me, and his mom and Alisan are in the waiting room. His whole family is really supportive, too.” Please let that be enough... just let me take him home. Kris was starting to feel that no good could come from Adam going ‘upstairs.’

Sophia nodded and seemed pleased by the information. “Has he talked about wanting to hurt himself or commit suicide?”

Kris winced horribly at the word ‘suicide.’ “No, not at all,” he said quickly, “we were just visiting my family in Arkansas for two weeks and everything was wonderful.” He propped up onto his elbow and kissed Adam on the temple. “He was so happy,” Kris said sadly. “I think... I think he’s trying too hard, tried to take on more than he could handle today and it got the best of him.”

That last statement was vague at best, but Sophia did not question him further. “Adam,” she said gently, “I’m going to let you go home, but you seem very depressed to me right now and I’m still concerned. I want to know how you’re going to cope with this.”

Adam stopped crying at once. “I can go home?” he asked in a tiny little voice.

“Yes, but there are stipulations here. I want to talk to your therapist and send my report. And I want you to tell me your plans to cope with your sadness tonight. I’m also recommending that you be started on medication immediately.”

“I’ll be spending the night,” offered Kris at once, hoping against hope that he was right about that. “I won’t leave him alone and I can call out of work tomorrow.” He didn’t know what the consequences of this would be, but he really didn’t give a shit.

“That’s wonderful, but I need to hear from Adam, too. Adam?”

“Watch a movie?” he said as if he needed Sophia’s approval of his suggestion.

“Very good. What else?”

Adam sniffed a few times and started to sit up, which Kris took as a good sign. Thank god!

“I like to cook. I can make dinner?”

“Okay. Dinner and a movie sounds excellent. Now, when you get up in the morning, I want you to call your therapist and set up an appointment for this week.”

“I saw her today.”

“I want you to see her again, Adam. I’m serious about that.”

“Alright.” Adam took a tissue from the box on the table next to his bed and blew his nose loudly. He agreed to sign a release for Sophia to talk to Sheila. After the worker left, Adam sat quietly on the edge of the bed waiting to be discharged and would not meet Kris’ eyes.

Should I apologize? Kris put his arm around Adam’s waist and had no idea what to say, but the silence was killing him. “Do you want to see Ali now? Or your mom?”

Adam just shook his head and stared at his lap.
“Adam, I’m so sorry, baby…I…”

“Stop. I don’t want to talk about it. Just take me home,” he said flatly.

Kris felt his stomach writhe with guilt, worried that Adam was angry with him and wondering if he’d even be allowed to spend the night. “Are you mad at me?” He had to know.

“I don’t know how I feel right now, Kris. Please, just take me home.”

“Okay.” It was torturous, but Kris had to set aside his own feelings and anxiety so he could concentrate on Adam. “But I left my car at the beach. We’ll need a ride.”

“Ali can drop us off,” Adam replied with all the feeling of a robot.

*Us. He said us. That must mean I can stay with him.* It was enough for Kris to pull through and he hung onto to fact that Adam wasn’t totally pushing him away.

Adam gave his mom a swift hug and said he’d be okay and not to worry. Her face was a mask of pain, but she accepted his assurance and kissed him on the cheek. *How many times has she been through this?*

More relief flooded through Kris as Adam cuddled into him in Alisan’s back seat, but no one spoke for the entire trip. When they arrived outside Adam’s apartment, Alisan turned around and leveled a penetrating stare at her best friend. “Puppy, I want to tell you something before you two go inside.” Adam looked at her sadly, his mouth turned down at the corners. “Kris was frantic when you called him and he did everything he could to find you quickly. When we got there, you were a mess and you wouldn’t respond to me. Adam, it was my decision to call the crisis line and we followed their advice. So if you’re going to be pissed at anyone, bring it right here,” she said steadily, pointing at her own chest.

Adam let out a long sigh that seemed to go on forever. Kris gazed at Adam’s hurt, beautiful face and somehow knew that whatever came out of his mouth wouldn’t be the end of the world. *I’m not going anywhere. We’ll work through it together.* He thought of the pendant hanging around his neck and suddenly knew a different kind of bravery.

“I’m not mad at him,” Adam said wearily. “I thought I could do it…face down the memories by myself. I thought I was better.” He knuckled his eyes and sighed again. “I used to love the beach, don’t you remember, Ali?” Sitting up a little, he turned and pressed a finger to Kris' lips. “I want to be better. I’m not mad, I’m just really, really sad.”

**Chapter 36**

Chop, chop, chop. Adam quickly sliced through the stalk of celery with one of his new knives and tossed the pieces into a large salad bowl along with the spinach, walnuts, and tomatoes. The chunks of chicken cooking in the skillet were almost browned and as he turned them, a few tears dropped from his eyes and sizzled in the hot pan. He put down the wooden tongs and gripped the edge of the counter with both hands, head bowed and his face screwed up to hold in the sadness. *Stop this. Stop your sniveling right now.* But more tears squeezed out against his will and fell into the saucer of
homemade vinaigrette dressing.

It had been like this from the moment he and Kris had stepped through the door. After they’d showered and changed into sleep clothes, Adam began cooking at once while Kris tried to contact his professor to say he wouldn’t be at class tonight. But preparing the meal wasn’t cutting it. Although he was desperately trying to put on brave face, Adam couldn’t stem the overwhelming sorrow and disappointment he felt at his failure this afternoon, made worse my the stubborn part of his brain that told him he was doomed to be damaged and alone for the rest of his life. He’ll leave me.

“Hey there…hey now,” a soothing voice said from behind him. Warm arms circled his waist and hugged him tightly.

Adam turned around and clutched at Kris as if he were one of those life buoys that get thrown to drowning people, knowing that it was pointless to refuse the comfort he so badly needed despite his shame at feeling weak. If only he could stay in those arms forever, it would be like having a permanent security blanket. Suddenly he smelled the chicken burning and quickly reached back to shut of the stove. “Fuck,” he mumbled, letting his head drop to Kris’ shoulder and holding back a sob. “I can’t even cook right.”

“You’re being too hard on yourself,” Kris said gently as he ran his fingers through Adam’s hair. “Look at me.” He lifted Adam’s chin and gazed steadily at him.

Magic eyes. Adam could feel some of the tension leave his body as he focused on those calm brown orbs. He took a deep breath and sniffed. “I hate feeling like this.” Weak, ashamed, sad and not knowing how much it was okay to need help.

Kris brushed his thumb across Adam’s lower lip. “Let’s just try to get through dinner. Then we can snuggle and talk if you want, or not. You can pick out a movie.”

He could tell that Kris was trying not to look sad. He’s trying to be strong for me. “You don’t have to call out of work tomorrow,” Adam said seriously while dabbing at his eyes with his sleeve, “I…I don’t want you to get fired because of me and you’re missing class tonight.” He felt bad enough having put Kris and Alisan through so much today. It would just make things worse if my stupidity got him in trouble.

“Adam,” Kris began tentatively, “you need--”

“I mean it, angel. I’ll be fine on my own.” This was a downright lie and they both knew it, but Adam was also sure that Kris understood his need to attempt some independence, too.

Kris furrowed his brow for a minute and then smiled. “How about this? I’ll call and offer to take the evening shift instead. We can go to the gym in the morning and have lunch together, and then I’ll go into work in the afternoon.”

“Yes,” Adam sighed in relief, “that’s a good compromise. Thank you.” He bent down for a kiss and abruptly an all too familiar urge to dominate sprang up along with a fierce need to drive away the negative emotions churning in his stomach. He immediately turned the tables on Kris and pushed him aggressively against the kitchen counter, frantically kissing him and biting his lips, neck and ears.

“Baby …I…you know I like it rough, but I think…” Kris gasped, unable to continue speaking as
Adam began to ruthlessly grind into him, stamping out the sadness, fear and shame with every vicious thrust. Yes...yes, better...this is so much better. Wait...better? I want to get better and this is not...right... He stopped at once and jumped back, shaking and breathing heavily.

Kris hunched over and put his hands on his knees, panting. “Shit,” he puffed out as his body shuddered.

Adam covered his mouth with his hands and shook his head, wide eyed at his own behavior. “Angel...I’m so sorry!” he cried miserably. “I should never...oh just fuck it!” He kicked at the table leg and missed, earning himself a bruised shin. “Fuck!”

“Calm down...it’s all right,” breathed Kris, trying to recover. “I’ve got a hard on the size of Texas right now and I’m not really complaining except...” He stood up and adjusted his pants. “I know you don’t want to do it that way.”

“Why can’t I just be fixed already?” Adam couldn’t help but laugh a little at the phrase and it took some of the edge off his mini tantrum. He plopped down into a kitchen chair and massaged his aching shin, disgusted with himself for relapsing like that. “Why can’t I just be fixed already? “So much for dinner,” he grumbled.

Kris walked to the stove and poked at the slightly singed meat with the tongs. “Looks all right to me. Plus, there’s no chance of getting salmonella poisoning now,” he grinned over his shoulder.

“Always finding the bright side,” Adam responded with a smirk, gradually feeling the effects of Kris’ positive outlook. It wasn’t that his sadness had disappeared, more like it had faded enough for some happiness to shine through. He stood up with the purpose of showing his angel exactly how much he was appreciated. “Come here and let me help you with that,” he said, indicating the bulge still tenting out his boyfriend’s sweatpants. “I think I’ll have you for dinner instead.” He waggled his eyebrows suggestively.

“Oooh...okay, I forgive you, baby, I forgive...yesssss...” Kris snorted with feigned indignation.

Adam snickered and palmed him a few times.

In less than a minute Kris was naked, his stiff length jutting out and seeping with precum. Adam scooted his chair right up to the table and took in the magnificent view. “I never want to lose him. I just need to find the right balance somehow. While he was clueless about how to achieve such a difficult goal, his cocksucking skills had drastically improved over the last month or so, and he felt a small bit of pride at having overcome that part of his ‘damage.’

Kris leaned back on his hands and bucked his hips. “You just going to stare at it all night?”

A huge Cheshire cat grin spread across Adam’s face and he licked his lips slowly, anticipating the taste and heat of the sumptuous treat before him. “I might if you don’t show some patience, lover,”
he winked.

Kris stuck his tongue out, but promptly bit down on it as Adam sucked him in so quickly that his arms buckled a little.

A feast, a delicious banquet of hot, hard dick, and it was all Adam’s for the taking. He was suddenly possessed by the desire to give Kris the best blowjob of his life, and he began this thrilling mission by contracting his throat and swallowing that luscious cock right down.

Kris fell back to his elbows and gasped loudly. “That feels…s-so good…”

After a few strokes with his mouth, Adam relaxed, let the tip hit the back of his throat, and swallowed again while breathing through his gag reflex.

“Oh…oh god!…Adam!” Kris moaned, the bliss clear on his features as his arms finally gave way. Flat on his back now, he shuddered and wrapped his legs around Adam’s upper body.

With a flash of inspiration, Adam drew back and lightly pressed his teeth around the sensitive head of Kris’ swollen cock while tonguing his slit repeatedly. The effect was superb and Adam felt damn proud to see his lover absolutely writhing on the table, sputtering and groaning. He rose to his knees for a better angle and fucking went to town on his meal, bobbing his head up and down, kneading Kris’ balls while squeezing the base of his dick, and using teeth every so often just to drive him crazy.

“Shit…oh jesus fucking…suck me…bite it…suck it!” he swore, panting and thrusting up into Adam’s mouth again and again.

Adam reached up and twisted Kris’ nipples…hard, and that did it.

“Fuck!” he shouted and emptied himself down Adam’s throat, quaking and bucking, gripping the edges of the table until he was finally spent.

Without a single cough or gag, Adam drank it all greedily as he massaged Kris’ dick and milked every last drop, feeling elated with success. When the delicious cum was all gone, he stood up and surveyed his man all spread out and boneless on the table, a stunning display of flesh and smooth skin. He placed a finger at Kris’ thigh and trailed it right up his over sensitized dick and all the way to his collarbone. Kris gave a full-body shiver and a long moan emitted from that pretty, crooked mouth.

“Adam…” Kris breathed, “…that was…fucking amazing.” He licked his lips and swallowed but did not move otherwise.

Adam rubbed his enormous erection through his sleep pants, so turned on that he was literally in pain. “Mmmm. Feeling a little worn out, lover? Guess I’ll just have to…” He pulled out his engorged, aching cock and hefted its weight. Kris opened his mouth wide. “You want?” Adam teased.

“Yes. Gimme.”

He walked around the table to Kris’ head but stayed out of reach, stoking himself right in front of his boyfriend’s eyes, taunting him and smirking.
“Evil, sexy wolf,” groaned Kris, straining his neck in an attempt to reach Adam’s throbbing dick.

“I’ll give it you…” Adam said, speeding up his hand, “right…” he squeezed his length and pumped it feverishly, “now…” Just before coming he thrust into Kris’ eager, waiting mouth and shot his load. “UH!”

Kris sucked him like a straw and even managed to lift his hands to pull Adam all the way in and gulped him down, eyes closed as if he were savoring it all.

Ten minutes later they were curled up on the couch and munching on dessert. “This salad actually turned out halfway decent,” said Adam, feeling considerably better than he had when they first got home.

“It’s delicious,” said Kris. He wiped a dribble of salad dressing off his chin and licked his fingers.

When they were finished eating, Adam put on some quiet mood music, stretched out on the couch and rested his head in Kris’ lap.

“You’re so beautiful,” said Kris looking down at him and caressing his face tenderly.

“Hmmm, I think you’ve got that backwards,” he murmured, enjoying the sensations and the calm, trance-like sounds of the song playing in the background. His mind began to drift and before he knew it, he was asleep, floating through the sunny sky until he landed on a beach.

It was the year of the cape. At seven years old, Adam just had to wear some sort of cape everywhere he went, school, his friends’ houses, restaurants, and of course, his favorite place in the world, the beach. Blonde haired, freckled faced little Adam was racing along the shore, his small toes digging into the sand as he ran, kicking at the waves every once in a while. “Whoooooo! Look at meeee! I’m flying!” he yelled into the wind as his blue cape fluttered and billowed out behind him. The smiling, tiny green turtles on his black swim shorts were grimy with wet sand and they were about to get much worse. “Hahaaaaa!” Adam skidded to a halt and leapt into the pool he’d dug right by the water, jumping and splashing his younger brother, who hollered and started throwing sand. An instant later the two boys were rolling around and wrestling energetically.

“Adam! Neil! Stop that right now!” admonished their mother. “Adam, why don’t you go play with Teddy and Jennifer. They’re making a sandcastle!” She dragged the boys apart and Adam skipped off to join his friends.

“Hi guys!” he smiled toothily. “Can I help?” The three of them worked on the castle for a while until it was done enough for the likes of children. As they stood up to survey the finished product, Adam slung an arm around each of his friends, beaming at them. “You are the bestest friends ever!” He planted a big kiss on Teddy’s cheek, then one on Jennifer’s, and threw some dry sand on the castle to make it glitter in the sun.

“I’m sorry, Matt. Look…I couldn’t help it…”

Adam rolled over in his half sleep and snuggled into Kris’ warm lap. He could almost feel the sun shining on his face and hear his own laughing, joyous voice…unafraid, trusting and innocent. Sun… sand… sparkling water… Matt? He blinked a few times.

“No, no one is hurt. Everything is fine now…I…” Kris let out a frustrated sigh as he held the phone to his ear.
Adam sat up and looked at his boyfriend’s frowning face. *Shit.* All the happy feelings from his dream vanished in an instant to be replaced by crushing shame and sadness again, stealing away his childhood with indifference.

Kris put a hand over his phone. “Sorry, baby,” he said, “I’ll be off in a second.”

“It’s fine,” Adam replied dully. He crawled over to the corner of the sofa and hugged his knees to his chest, waiting for Kris to finish. Feeling suddenly small, he sniffed and tried to check the tears that were burning in his eyes. *Baby. Whiner. Wimp. No! Shut up! It’s okay to be sad! Oh? And why are you so sad, baby Lambert? Huh? Thought you were a tough man, didn’t you…didn’t you? Look at you now…pathetic.* He tucked his chin and buried his face into his knees so Kris wouldn’t see him crying, but he couldn’t stop his shoulders from shaking.

“Matt…I gotta go. Yeah…bye.”

Adam knew Kris was about to comfort him and he needed it, but wished to god that he didn’t.

“Come here, love.” Kris pulled Adam into his arms and rocked him gently. “It’s not your fault…Matt was being an idiot. Don’t worry about it.”

“I don’t care about Matt,” Adam choked out, “I care about you. Y-you’re going to get in trouble…and, and…” He pressed his face into Kris’ chest and swallowed the lump in his throat with difficulty.

“And nothing. I already talked to Rick, my boss, and it’s totally fine. I’m not in trouble, Adam.”

“R-really?”

“Yeah. God, baby, I wish I could make your pain go away,” he said in a thick voice, hugging Adam tightly and placing a kiss on the top of his head.

“Me, too. I was feeling so good this morning, so high on life…I want to feel that again.”

“You want to tell me about it? About this morning?”

Adam sat up and wiped at his eyes. “Not really, but…maybe it will help?” he said, completely unsure if it would or not. But deep down he knew that Kris would be able to see the positive side of it all, and perhaps that would do…something.

“It’s up to you. I’m not going to push.” Kris brushed a thumb across Adam’s wet cheek and pecked his lips briefly.

“Alright,” Adam sighed, still sniffing. He lay back down in his former position and looked up into his boyfriend’s gentle face. *It will help.* So I went to therapy today and it was awesome. I told Sheila all about Christmas in Arkansas, how I hung out with your dad and Danny and even had a snowball fight.” Adam’s mouth turned up in a sad smile at the memory. “And then I told her how I dealt with your dumbfuck cousin, and that I went to a lake and all the times I battled myself and won.” He stroked the angel on his bracelet. “I showed her this,” he said quietly. “Kris, she was so proud of me and then after I called you I was just so proud of myself.”

Kris grinned. “For very good reasons. You totally kick ass,” he said, gazing down at Adam lovingly.
“Hmph.” That’s debatable. “Anyway, it was such a nice day and I decided to take a walk, you know, and just feel the sun on my face. It’s been a while since I’ve done that around here, but I kind of got into it.” For a moment he recalled how amazing it had been to strut down the road like he owned it, not because he was a good fuck, but because he felt sort of...healthy. He shook his head and continued. “I kept going for a long time, like hours, and then I realized that I was getting close to Santa Monica, and this crazy idea fucking jumped into my head. I thought, why not? I’ve handled everything else so well lately and I…” he paused and cringed a little. “I want to get better.” Adam closed his eyes and willed himself not to cry. “I went to the beach, the one that...you know. Actually, I ran there because I thought it would be easier that way and...I ran right up to the water. God...I used to love the ocean so much…” His breath hitched and he curled his fists into tight balls. *Just keep talking...get it over with.*

Kris bent down and pressed a kiss to his forehead. Adam cleared his throat and began playing with his bracelet again. “For about thirty seconds, I was okay. I thought I’d done it. And then…it was bad, really bad. I mean, okay, not as horrible as the last time, but still…” Every muscle in his body tensed as he thought about the flashback that had ripped him apart and caused him to collapse on the sand and scream for his very life.

“How did you manage to call me?” Kris asked quietly.

He tried to relax, taking Kris’ hand and tracing the lines on his palm. “I...I heard your voice...in my head.” This had been the truly strange part of it all. While in the throes of his worst nightmare, Adam had distinctly heard Kris professing his love over and over again.

“You did?” Kris asked, looking a little surprised. “What did I say?”

“You said...you said that you loved me.” He peered up to find a wide grin on his lover’s face.

“Yeah, that sounds like something I’d say,” Kris nodded and winked.

Smiling a little, Adam found the strength to finish his story. “It was so weird. I was still having memories for a while, right, but then your voice was there, too, kind of drowning out their voices. And, I don’t know, it was like I was in between places and I wanted to tell you that I loved you, too. I started yelling it, but you weren’t really there.” Adam really hoped that he wasn’t sounding like a crazy person. “It’s hard to explain. But I remembered I had a phone and I thought if I called you, then I could tell you I loved you. Obviously, that didn’t work out. All I did was blubber and cry for help and then my phone died. Well, you know the rest. When I lost the call I just laid there, feeling empty and broken inside. I thought...I still feel like I’ll never get better, like I failed miserably and now...now...” But he couldn’t go on. He sat up and covered his face, unable to hold back the tears any longer.

“Oh my sweet man,” Kris said soothingly, wrapping his arms around Adam. “I know I’m not your therapist or anything, but I hope you realize how incredible it is that you got through that as well as you did.”

What? Y-you can’t b-be serious.” He hiccupped a few times and looked at Kris like he’d sprouted two extra heads. “I w-went to the hospital!”

“No, you went to the emergency room. And you said it wasn’t as bad as the last time, and you were able to call me, and...baby, you remembered that I love you and you came back...all by yourself,” he finished and kissed Adam on the cheek.
He tried to let the words sink in, wanting to believe that Kris was right with every fiber of his being. *He is right, though. That’s what happened.* Sitting there a bit stunned, Adam latched onto the first thought that came to his mind. “I’m sorry, that I put you in that position, that I said…” He dropped his head in shame, remembering how he’d tried to manipulate Kris so that he wouldn’t have to get in the ambulance. “You did the right thing.”

“I’m not going to lie, Adam, it was probably one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to do. It ranks up there with confronting my grandma,” he said sadly, but then his voice grew more confident. “I know I made the right call, though, and I’d do it again because I love you. You hear me? I love you, you gorgeous man and there is not a thing in the world that’s going to change that.” It seemed like Kris had been waiting all day to say these words and all of a sudden he was gripping Adam’s shoulders and almost shaking him. “So you bit off more than you could chew…so what? People do it all the time and even so, you did a fucking awesome job handling it. You’re not anymore damaged than me or anyone else out there, okay? We’ve all got our shit and we’re all muddling through it the best we can. Now stop being so stubborn and realize how far you’ve come in the past few months. ‘Never get better?’ That’s just…just so untrue! You’re already better!” His chest was heaving with emotion now. “Get it through your pretty skull, Adam, I’m not leaving you, not now, not ever!”

“Holy shit.” *I don’t think I’ve ever seen him like this!* His jaw fell open and his eyes went as wide as dinner plates. *He’s not fucking around!* The only response that felt appropriate was to launch himself at Kris and try to kiss him to death. After a few minutes of smothering his totally compliant lover with his mouth, Adam came up with much better, insanely brilliant response. It was the perfect time to show Kris the level of trust and dedication he felt. *Plus it will be fucking hot!*

He sat up and straddled his boyfriend’s thighs. “Angel…you are the most amazing creature on this planet.”

Poor Kris looked as if he really had been kissed to death with his hair a mess, eyes glazed over with desire and his body sunk a good several inches into the couch. “Thank…thank you,” he gasped. “Does that mean…” he licked his lips and took a deep breath, “…that you finally believe me?”

Adam considered this for a moment. “I’m much closer to it. It’s just hard to convince myself sometimes. I’ve got some bad thinking habits and like you said, I’m fucking stubborn…just ask Ali.”

“Well I’m happy to repeat my little speech anytime if that’s the kind of reaction I can expect,” he smirked.

“Oh you’re about to get much more than that,” Adam said playfully at first, but then changed to a serious tone. “Kris, I want to do something new tonight.

“Yeah? What did you have in mind?”

It felt extremely odd to be asking this, much the same as the first time he’d requested rimming. Adam squirmed on the couch and tried to shush his nerves. “I think I’m ready…for your finger.” He blushed and looked down quickly, feeling that uncharacteristic shyness that seemed to creep up in awkward situations. When he didn’t hear anything, he raised his head. Oh…oh wow.

Kris’ eyes were sparkling with tears and a tiny little drop trickled out of one eye and down the side of his jaw. “I…Adam…oh…just…” he started to babble.

“Hey, you’re not the one who’s supposed to be speechless here,” Adam said in a feeble attempt at a joke.
“Silly,” Kris sniffed. “You know I’ve never had any expectations…you know that, right? I’d be completely happy if you never…”

“I know, angel, but I want this. I’ve been fantasizing about if for a while now. I’m ready.” As he said the words, he knew they were true, but it didn’t stop him from being nervous about it. “Can we do it just like the first time with your tongue? I need to watch.” It would probably take some time before he was comfortable having Kris do that from behind.

“Absolutely, whatever you want.”

“I want you,” he said, leaning in to capture Kris’ lips. The kissing helped to calm Adam a bit and after a while he pulled back and stood up. “On my bed.” Okay…okay…yeah…I’m gonna do it. As they walked to his bedroom, he tried not to psyche himself out too much. I’ve done this to countless guys and I’ve had his tongue really deep in me…it’s going to be amazing.

Kris sat on the bed and watched as Adam rummaged through his supply drawer, mumbling about which lube to use and how much they might need. “You’re extremely cute right now,” he said affectionately to Adam.

“Hmph. Okay, this one I think. It’s the best I have.” He pulled out a small bottle of Pjur Eros Body Glide before sitting down next to Kris. You’re acting like an anxious teenager. Relax.

“Relax,” Kris said, echoing Adam’s thoughts. “I’m going to take good care of you, lover, you know that.”

Adam nodded. “Kiss me. A lot.”

Kris eased Adam back on the bed and straddled him, kissing first his forehead, cheek, and neck before slipping into his mouth. Slow glides of lips and tongues gradually became more urgent as the men swiveled their hips in rhythm. Kris rolled off and they both removed their t-shirts before coming back together, skin touching skin, their hard erections rubbing beneath cloth as they caressed and kissed until they were frantic to be naked, to feel it all. Kris went first and then pulled off Adam’s sleep pants so they could writhe their bare flesh against one another.

“Angel…touch me everywhere,” Adam groaned, desperately wanting to feel his lover’s hands and lips all over his body.

“So gorgeous, every inch of you…so sexy,” he whispered as he covered Adam’s body with feather light kisses.

“You make me feel sexy,” said Adam honestly, shivering and panting when he felt warm, moist lips brush his inner thigh. He drew his knees up and let them fall open, exposing himself. I am so okay with this. Kris continued to stroke and kiss his thighs and stomach, then reached up to grab a pillow and positioned it under Adam’s hips. Adam hooked his arms beneath his knees and pulled back. “Lick me, angel…please…”

“Yes,” Kris said with a bit of a growl before spreading him apart slowly. “Beautiful… beautiful,” he murmured. He bent down and licked a hot, wet stripe across Adam’s puckered entrance.

Adam hissed and rocked his hips a little.
“As you wish,” Kris winked and licked him again.

“Did you…did you just use a Princess Bride reference?”

“Maybe.”

Adam chuckled. “That’s so awes…ooohhhhh god, yessss…” Fluttering, flickering and then large wet circles made him dizzy with want, but when Kris stuck his slick, pink tongue deeply inside, Adam gasped and dug his nails into the back of his thighs. “Yes!” he cried, muscles quivering and his whole body trembling. “I’m ready…ready, angel…finger me.”

Kris sat up and licked all around his mouth. “Mmmm.” He grinned and picked up the bottle of lube, poured a generous amount into his hand and squeezed some more between Adam’s legs.

Moment of truth here. But there was no way on earth Adam was going to stop him. One of his most cherished fantasies was about to come true and he couldn’t wait for it.

“I’m going to go really slow…don’t worry.”

“I’m not worried. I trust you.”

They exchanged loving glances. Kris pressed his pinky gently to Adam’s ring of muscle and rubbed and circled it lightly until he felt it relax.

“Go,” Adam moaned.

Just the tip of that pinky glided in an inch and then Kris pulled it out.

“Again.” In and out…in and out…a little deeper each time went the small digit, exciting all the nerve endings in and around Adam’s entrance. “Fucking…fantastic…keep going…” Watching this not only made him feel safe, but it was extremely arousing to see it disappear into his body over and over again. Although he’d never worked up to two fingers on his own, he was hoping to feel that tonight.

Kris twisted his wrist as he pushed this time and Adam felt him brush tantalizingly close to the spot.

“You are fucking hot, baby,” said Kris, stroking his dick a few times and looking intensely aroused. “God, you have no idea.”

“Angel…please…”

He chuckled at Adam’s impatience and drew out his pinky, smoothly replacing it with his middle finger, sliding in and out easily now. Adam relaxed completely, mesmerized by the sight and tingling everywhere with pleasure. Kris crooked his finger and started moving it around inside, searching, searching and then…

“There!” Adam gasped. “Oh shit! Fuck, do it again…again!”

“You mean like this?” Kris asked with a smirk, hitting Adam’s prostate right on target this time.

“Shit!” It felt a thousand times better than doing it himself. “Goddammit…more and harder this
time!” Why the hell did I wait so long? He looked straight into Kris’ eyes. “Fuck me with your finger, lover…do it.”

His words made Kris moan longingly and he jammed his finger up and inside, touching the spot repeatedly and thrusting it like a cock inside Adam’s wet hole. He got up on his knees and started stroking Adam with his other hand.

“Oh jesus! Two…fuck it…give me two!…oh no no no…don’t slow down!” Adam begged.

“I’ve got to,” Kris panted. Ignoring Adam’s whines, he eased up his pace and went back to concentrating, pouring more lube on his hands.

Adam’s arms were shaking with the effort to hold his knees up now. “Help me…push me back please.” It was the most exposed he’d ever been in his life, bent in half just like he’d folded so many men over the years. But it afforded him and excellent view and he wasn’t scared one bit.

With painstaking care, Kris wiggled two fingers in to the first knuckle and stopped. “Okay?”

Adam felt the stretch. It was different, but he was so lubed up that it didn’t really hurt. He nodded and Kris slid them in a little farther. “Wait, that’s enough. Let me get used to it.” Full. “Just a bit more.” Adam was pushing himself, he knew it, but he wanted it so badly. As the fingers went deeper, he tried to let every inch of his body relax. “Stop.” He waited for bad memories to come, but none did. It was just Kris, looking at him with adoration and patience. “Bend them. Find it, angel.”

And Kris did.

“Motherfucker!” If Adam could have arched off the bed in this position he would have, so glorious was the feeling.

“More?”

“Are you shitting me? You stop now and I’ll kill you!” he yelled.

“Hmmmm, I’ve got an idea.”

“If it involves removing your fingers, then I hate it already.”

“Just for a second…I swear it will be worth it,” Kris said.

“Goddamn better be!”

A minute later and Adam agreed that, yeah, okay this was a fucking genius idea!

Kissing each other passionately, Adam jerked himself off as Kris fucked him rapidly with his fingers. “Fucking genius!” he cried out, tearing his lips away, lost in the dual sensations of pleasure rippling throughout his body. Faster and faster went the fingers, pounding into his ass and igniting the bundle of nerves almost every time. He squeezed and stroked his dick ruthlessly as the pleasure mounted, Kris clearly on a mission now to drive him insane. “Oh shit! Kris!! Yes! Oh…oh…oh…OH MY FUCKING UUUHHHHHHH!” The orgasm slammed into him and swept throughout his body like a tidal wave, at least double the strength of his usual climax. “SHIT!” he shouted as it crashed down and his cum pumped onto his hand and stomach. “Jesus! What the fuck…was that?!” he gasped painfully, trying to breathe.
“Mmmm, that, my love, is what happens when you do both at the same time. Good, isn’t it?” Kris bent down and started cleaning up Adam’s belly, lapping up the cum as he stroked himself.

“Good? Fuck, that it is the…understatement…of the year! Oh god, angel…you’re so damn sexy when you do that.”

Kris came all over Adam and had more to clean up then, but he wasn’t complaining.

“Weren’t you supposed to watched a movie tonight?” Kris asked when they were cuddling and nuzzling each other a little later.

“Oh yeah. Woops.”
“Treatment aims to reduce symptoms by encouraging you to recall the event…express your feelings, gain some sense of control…” Kris scrolled down the page and continued to read aloud quietly. “In some cases, expressing grief helps to complete the necessary mourning process. Support groups can also be very helpful.” Wonder if he ever went to a group. He took a sip of his cranberry juice and stretched his legs under the desk. “Behavioral therapy is used to treat avoidance symptoms….can include being exposed to the object that triggers your symptoms until you become used to it and no longer avoid it…called graded exposure…” Huh. Don’t think he was consciously trying to do that, but he jumped the gun a bit, didn’t he?

About once every week, Kris spent time at his laptop browsing different pages on PTSD so he could understand Adam’s condition better and learn how to be more helpful. One thing he’d discovered so far was that while Adam had many of the symptoms including flashbacks and avoidance of things that reminded him of his trauma, there were some that he didn’t appear to have at all. Kris had come to the conclusion that his boyfriend must have made progress over the past ten years whether he realized it or not. I wish he’d stop being so hard on himself.

Kris had been proud of his little speech earlier this week and he knew that deep down Adam must have believed him, but old habits die hard. The very next morning as they lay in bed snuggling after sex, Adam had related his childhood beach dream and caught himself saying that he’d never be able to walk on the sand again. Dork. But damn do I love him. Sometimes it felt like his heart was made just to love that beautiful, stubborn man.

Kris stifled a yawn and rubbed his eyes. He’d been up early this morning writing some lyrics that had come to him in the middle of the night, something like: living doesn’t come first try, it takes a lifetime getting it right. He scanned the website to see if there was any information about medication. Adam had called him last night in a right state, grumbling about how Sheila had referred him to a psychiatrist and how much he hated being on pills because it reminded him that he wasn’t ‘normal.’

He heard a soft knock and looked up to see Matt’s nose poking around the door.

“You’re up early for a Friday,” he said, motioning for his roommate to come in. “I thought you didn’t have work until this afternoon.”

“I don’t. I just couldn’t sleep,” Matt replied as he padded in and plopped down on the bed. “You got a minute?”

Things had been a bit strained between them ever since Monday, and by the serious tone in Matt’s voice, Kris could tell that he wanted to discuss it. “Yeah, sure.” He closed his laptop and turned his chair around. “What’s up?”

Matt chewed on his lip before speaking. “Listen, it’s really none of my business who you date and I don’t mean to pry or anything,” he began, “but when you took off like that on Monday…damn, Kris you really scared me. I’ve never seen you look like that before.”
Kris frowned. “What makes you think that it was about Adam?”

“Come on man, I’m not stupid. If it had been anyone else you would have told me.” When Kris did not confirm or deny this, Matt crossed his legs on the bed and continued. “Anyway, you looked so freaked out and Rick was really worried, too. I’m sorry I got so upset about it, I was just concerned about you.”

He knew that Matt’s heart was in the right place, but he wasn’t about to go into details. *It’s not my right to talk about Adam.* Kris was fiercely protective of his boyfriend’s privacy. He sighed and scratched at the stubble on his jaw. “It’s all right. Thank you for being concerned about me, but everything is fine now, really. I’m sorry I scared you,” he said sincerely.

Matt leaned forward and chewed his lip again, a sign that he was choosing his words carefully. “Why don’t you…you know, ever talk about him?”

“Adam is a really private person, and I have to respect that. But I will tell you this. He makes me the happiest I’ve ever been in my entire life. I mean it.” His mouth stretched into a sappy, lovesick smile as he thought about his love, and for a second he almost forgot someone else was in the room.

“Kris? Over here, man.” Matt snapped his fingers a few times, smirking a little.

Kris shook his head and chuckled. “Sorry. Look, if it helps any, I know that eventually he wants to meet you, properly, that is.”

“Really?” This news seemed to lighten Matt’s mood considerably. “When?”

“I don’t know yet, but he loves me a lot and he knows that you’re my best friend, so I’m sure it will happen at some point,” Kris said with that silly grin still plastered on his face. “I also think it would be cool if you met Alisan, Adam’s best friend. She’s a riot and you’d probably get along really well.”

“Is she hot?”

“Matt!”

“What?” He waggled his eyebrows. “Is she?”

“I think she’s very pretty, but aren’t you still with Jenny?”

“Nah, we broke it off a week ago. She doesn’t like my sense of humor,” he said with a dramatic sigh as if that were the crime of the century.

Kris snorted and rolled his eyes. “Oh now there’s a surprise.” He was happy that the tension appeared to be gone as they eased into their usual banter.

Matt flipped him the bird and lay back on Kris’ bed with his hands behind his head. “Whatever. So tell me more about Alisan. Does she have nice boobs? What about her ass?”

“Yeah, because that’s usually what I’m looking at. God, you are such a dog,” Kris said, but he wasn’t serious. He knew that Matt was really a gentleman and was just goofing around. “She’s short and slim and has a pretty face, but she’d be crazy to date you. Now get off my bed. I’ve got to get ready.”
“What’s wrong with me? I’m devastatingly handsome and I’m an excellent kisser. Want me to demonstrate?” Matt grinned as he got up and pursed his lips in Kris’ direction, making stupid kissy faces at him.

“Ewwww, gross!” yelped Kris, looking appalled and waving his hands around in distress. Then he laughed and punched Matt on the shoulder. “Get out, you idiot, and let me get ready.”

“Fine, fine,” Matt chuckled. “Where are you going anyway?”

“To Jason’s to do a little recording before I head over to Adam’s.”

Matt walked to the door, but just before leaving he turned around, stuck his hip out and batted his eyes in a ridiculous manner. “Tell him I said hi!”

“Out!” Kris yelled and threw a pillow at him.

A little later as he drove to the recording studio where he rented time, Kris thought about the lyrics he’d written down this morning. Maybe I’ll do a new track for the album. But then he remembered that Adam’s birthday was at the end of the month and decided that a song would be the perfect gift along with some other things he was planning. This is one birthday he’ll never forget! He smiled to himself and started whistling a nameless tune that had been rolling around in the back of his brain for a few days.

Jason’s rates were pretty damn good given the competition in the area, and Kris had been very grateful to his music professor for the contact. He pulled into the lot and checked the clock on his dashboard. Two hours until I said I would be at Adam’s. That should be plenty of time.

"This time, you say is for good
You’ve played kind
For as long as you could
With your head in your hands
And your tears on my chest
I think to myself,
I'm not giving up yet
And I say,

Is it over?
Or can I turn you around
If I crawl on my knees
To rewrite our story tonight
Would you care or are you already gone?”

As the words flowed from Kris’ lips, little needles of pain pricked his heart the way they did every time he sang this song. Ethan, his most recent ex, had walked out on him without looking back despite how hard Kris had begged him to stay. With determination, Kris used the emotion to fuel his voice, adding a little extra power to it as he thought about how much stronger he was with Adam. He thought it made him sound sad but not weak.

“That’s good, man, real good!” Jason said over the intercom about an hour into the session.

Kris took off the headphones and gave him the thumbs up before returning to the control room.
“Kris, I have to say this is sounding a hell of lot better and I’m glad you decided to rework the album. Not that it wasn’t good before, it’s just…well I can’t really put my finger on it.”

“Maybe I sound more confident?” He fiddled with his pendant a bit and grinned widely.

“Actually, yeah, that’s exactly it now that you say it,” Jason said earnestly. “Let’s go through the guitar track you recorded for this song and see if it still works.”

By the time he reached Adam’s apartment, Kris was in a very good mood and eager to see his lover. He was just about to knock on the door when he stopped, fist poised in the air as the silky sound of Adam’s voice seeped out into the hallway and graced his ears. Leaning against the door, he closed his eyes and absorbed the heavenly music. Suddenly he recognized the tune that Adam hummed occasionally, but this time there were words to it.

“Don’t fly away angel, fold up your wings and fall into my arms,” came the voice from inside.

Kris gasped and quickly rapped his knuckles on the wood. Although he would give anything to hear more of that song right now, he had the feeling that Adam wouldn’t want him to listen to it this way. The singing stopped at once and Adam threw open the door.

“Angel!” he cried with joy written on every inch of his face.

*Damn, he still takes my breath away every single time. Oh god, he’s wearing lip gloss!* He dropped his backpack and let Adam squeeze all the air out of him with those long arms. “How come I always miss you so much?” Kris said into his boyfriend’s chest. He inhaled deeply and sighed as the familiar scent permeated his being. *Home.*

Adam chuckled and kissed the side of his head. “Because we were meant to be together, that’s why. Oh hey! Guess what?”

“Hmm?”

“I have a job interview tomorrow!”

“That’s awesome, baby!” Kris exclaimed as he drew back and looked into Adam’s animated face. “Where is it?”

Adam tugged him inside and closed the door. “This new club that just opened up. I’m going to sing for the manager tomorrow at one.”

“Can I come and watch?” he asked as they walked to the couch.

“Well duh, of course you can. Now, how long has it been since I kissed those pretty lips of yours?”

“Hmm…Tuesday?”

Adam looked horrified. “Oh my god, that is way too long. Get over here, gorgeous,” he commanded lovingly and pulled Kris down onto his lap.

“Your lips are shiny again,” said Kris with that lost feeling he got every time he saw those freckles all glossed up.
“Just for you, angel,” Adam murmured as he brought their mouths together.

Kris reveled in the slight tackiness he felt on his lover’s lips and thought that he might have just discovered a new kink. *Speaking of kinks…* “Baby,” he moaned as Adam started licking and sucking on his neck, “can we do knives tonight?”

“You know,” Adam said seriously and stopped his attack for a moment, “if we’re going to do that, you should tell me how you want it. Is it just the feel of the metal, do you like scratches or actual cuts?”

Kris thought about it for a minute. He’d never had real cuts before, but the idea excited him tremendously. “Scratches and maybe just really shallow cuts for now. I’ll say stop if it’s too much.”

“Fuck, just hearing you talk about it makes me hot,” Adam groaned and set about making Kris writhe in pleasure as he gave him a hickey right under his collar bone. All too quickly they both seemed to realize that it had been three days since they’d had sex. “We’ve got to fix that, like now,” said Adam with a fire in his eyes that could burn down a forest.

“Hell yeah.”

And fix it they did, right on the coffee table in front of the couch until all the gloss was gone from Adam’s lips.

Needless to say, they were down right giddy afterwards and as Adam fixed them some sandwiches in the kitchen, they couldn’t stop goofing off and slapping each other’s asses.

“Ouch! Hey that one was hard!” Kris pouted, but then a naughty gleam sparked in his eyes. “Do it again, lover.” Adam just snorted and set down two plates on the table. “Um, what are these?” Kris lifted the bread and eyed the squiggly vegetables skeptically.

“Oh my god, you sound just like a five year old,” Adam laughed. “They’re bean sprouts and I promise if you eat them all like a good boy, I’ll give you dessert,” he said, grinning mischievously.

Kris was about to respond with a witty comeback when he his phone rang. He pulled it from his back pocket and looked to see who was calling, but he didn’t recognize the number. “Do you mind?”

“Nope!” Adam said cheerfully as he took a bite of sandwich.

Kris pushed his chair back a bit and pressed the answer button. “Hello?”

“Hey Kris, it’s Brian!” came an enthusiastic voice.

Damn. This is seriously bad timing. “Oh, um hi.”

Brian didn’t seem to notice Kris’ less than chipper tone. “Hi! I’m just calling to confirm our plans for Sunday. We’re still getting together, right?”

“Yes,” he said evenly, glancing at Adam who now wore a curious expression. Kris smiled at him and decided to end the call at once. “Okay, so I’ll see you then. Bye.”
“Wait! I still need your address.”

He sighed and decided that he was being ridiculous about this. Adam knew that he was going to be hanging out with Brian and he wasn’t going to tiptoe around or lie. “Sorry Brian, I forgot. Do you have a pen?” he said more calmly.

Kris gave him the address and watched as Adam’s face went from curious to angry to sad and then angry again in rapid succession. Shit. “Okay, I gotta go now, I’ll see you on Sunday. Uh huh, okay bye.” He hung up and vowed not to cringe or be apologetic about any of this. I’m not doing anything wrong here.

“So Brian, huh?” Adam pulled a sprout from his sandwich and chomped on it as if the tender shoot had wronged him somehow. His anger, however, was short lived and in the next second he dropped his forehead to the table with a loud thud. When he looked back up, his eyes were glassy and he wore a sorrowful expression that tore at Kris’ heart.

It’s okay, we can work through this. “Talk to me, baby,” he said as he took Adam’s hand and squeezed it gently.

Adam shook his head, got up from the table and left the kitchen without a word. “Damn,” Kris mumbled. This was exactly the sort of thing that could mess him up good, but he fought it down, that urge to call Brian back and cancel because he knew that it wasn’t the real issue at hand. He sat there for a minute and screwed up his courage, trying to see this as an opportunity for practice. Then, with a heavy sigh he walked into Adam’s room and found him curled up on the bed facing away from the door. Seeing him lying there reminded Kris of how Adam had looked on the beach, all broken and helpless. “Been a rough week, baby,” he said softly as he crawled across the mattress and spooned him.

Adam nodded but didn’t say anything. He was playing with something in his hand that Kris couldn’t make out. Craning his head a bit, he looked closely and saw that it was…

“Oh wow! I’ve been kind of wondering what happened to that.”

Adam rolled onto his back and held up the necklace with its note pendant, letting it swing a little in the air and watching it go back and forth. “I keep it in a box,” he said in a quiet little voice. The smallest frown tugged at his mouth.

“A box?” I always hoped that he might wear it someday. It had been a spur of the moment decision to leave it here all those months ago, but he didn’t regret it. Although he’d dropped in on the table it in haste, Kris knew exactly why he’d done so.

“A box?” I always hoped that he might wear it someday. It had been a spur of the moment decision to leave it here all those months ago, but he didn’t regret it. Although he’d dropped in on the table it in haste, Kris knew exactly why he’d done so.

“Mm-hmm. A special one that my mom gave me.” Adam reached down to the floor, brought up an ornate wooden box and set it on his stomach. It had beautiful, intricate designs on it that made Kris think of his father’s work. “I could never wear this necklace, angel,” he said as he dangled it above him again and continued tracking its movements like he was trying to hypnotize himself.

“Why not?”

“It’s too precious to me. If something happened to it, if it got broken or lost…” He swallowed and pinched his eyes closed for a moment. “…I don’t know what I’d do,” he finished in a slightly raspy voice.
Kris felt wetness on his cheek and realized that he was crying a little. He rubbed his face on the pillow and took a deep breath. “Do you know why I left that here?”

“Not really, but it was the thing that eventually brought me back to you.”

“Yeah?” Kris decided that he could wait to tell his story; he wanted to hear Adam’s first.

“Yeah.” Adam tapped the pendant to keep it swinging. “It reminded me why I was attracted to you beyond just the physical…like, it’s a symbol of your personality, something real…a real man who trusted me that night for reasons I will never understand.”

Kris propped up on his elbow and rested his left hand on Adam’s chest, feeling the steady heartbeat thumping into his palm. “I don’t know why I did either, but there was just something about you…like somehow I knew that underneath all of that hot, sexy beast was a harmless child who wouldn’t hurt a fly.” He caught the silver note and pressed it to Adam’s heart. “I left this here to remind you of me, even if we never saw each other again, I wanted you to remember me forever, and…” Kris paused and turned Adam’s face to meet his own, “…I wanted to know that a piece of me was with you. It was a gift in return for what you gave me.”

Adam’s dark brows furrowed up in sadness and little lines creased his forehead. “You wanted to thank me for kicking you out?”

“No, you gorgeous man. Our time together helped me be the person I am today…it made me feel strong and brave. I knew I’d never be the same after that because something new woke up in me. It’s why I took the tie…to remember.”

Adam stared deeply into his eyes as if he were trying to soak in every word and commit it to memory. Then he opened the box and Kris saw the other half of the tie folded neatly inside. “My mom gave this box to me when I was in the hospital…right…right after it happened.” His voice began to tremble and he looked away from Kris. “It was my grandfather’s…he died before I was born and…and my mom told me to put happy memories in it, but…” Adam sniffed and a tear squeezed out of his eye. He caressed the silky cloth inside the box a few times. “I never had anything to put in here…until now. Kris, I wanted to die, too. I…I thought maybe I could meet my grandfather and I wouldn’t be in pain anymore.” After disclosing this gruesome fact, he lay there gazing at the ceiling, but Kris could tell that it was taking everything Adam had not to burst into tears.

The idea of his beautiful man wanting to end his own life was so horrifying, so painful that it made Kris physically ill, but he recalled what he’d read that morning about how expressing feelings could help people with PTSD and shoved down the nausea. He put the necklace back in the box, closed it up and set it to the side. “Come on, baby, let it out,” he said soothingly, rubbing his lover’s chest with calm strokes.

Apparently those words were the key to unlocking Adam’s pain, and he opened his mouth wide and let out the saddest, most desperate wail that Kris had ever heard. Oh my god…oh my Adam…still so much hurt. Kris gathered up his boyfriend’s limp, heaving body and cuddled him close. But Adam didn’t even cling to him; he didn’t seem to have the energy, all of it going into those wracking sobs that were shredding Kris’ heart as if it were made of paper.

Twenty minutes later Adam was fast asleep, curled into a little ball all wrapped up in Kris’ arms. So much sadness trapped in there. Kris was starting to perspire from the intense heat of their bodies pressed together and his t-shirt was sopping wet with Adam’s tears, but he didn’t care. He felt as if
he’d been preparing for this relationship all of his life. His nurturing and attentive nature mixed with everything he’d learned and the new skills he’d gained made him the perfect partner for Adam. *Anyone else would run screaming from this.* Kris wondered if he was a glutton for punishment. *No, I don’t feel punished. I feel strong and loved.* He pursed his lips against Adam’s hot temple and smiled. *My heart was just made for him.*

When Adam woke up he started apologizing and showed every sign of wanting to stay in bed, but Kris was having none of it. “Get up, baby, we’re going out!” he chirped.

“**We are?**” Adam rubbed at his tear-encrusted eyes and looked confused. “**Where are we going?**”

“For a walk. It’s a beautiful afternoon and I want to take you to this store down the road.”

“What store?”

Kris pecked him on the cheek and grinned. “It’s a surprise.” *I can’t wait to see his face! I just hope they have them there.* He knew exactly where it was since he drove by it every time he came to Adam’s apartment.

“Yeah?” A tiny glimmer of excitement peeked out through his slightly bloodshot eyes.

“Uh-huh, and I promise you’ll love it. Now come on!” He tugged on his hand until he was successful in getting him up.

Adam rose slowly and stretched his long limbs. “Why are you in such a good mood?”

“Because I’m in love with a tall, handsome man who loves me, too,” he beamed.

His smile was so infectious that Adam started to grin, too. “Yes he does, very much.” He swept Kris up in a hug and kissed him hard on the mouth.

Kris felt his body respond to the sudden passion on Adam’s lips, but he pulled back. “Time for that later…let’s get ready!”

After freshening up, they left the apartment hand-in-hand and started down the road. Adam was still a bit off and he didn’t talk much as they strolled, but that was okay with Kris. He took in the bustling activity and led them about a mile through town until they finally reached their destination.

“**Animal Crackers?**” Adam asked, “you wanted to bring me to a pet store? Why did…oh!” Abruptly his face split into an enormous, sunny smile and he bounced on his toes. “Do they have Fifi dogs here?”

“I hope so! But even if they don’t, there’s nothing better than cute puppies to brighten up a day. Come on!” Grinning from ear to ear, they raced into the building like two over excited boys and looked around for the dog section.

“**Over there!**” Adam exclaimed and pointed to the sign. Now he was the one dragging Kris and for someone who didn’t care for dogs, Adam was certainly eager to see them. “**Oh my god! Kris! Look! Look! A Fifi dog!**” he crowed, practically jumping up and down in his joy to see the adorable Mexican Hairless puppy playing with a squeaky toy in its cage.

*Ahhhh. God, I love seeing him like this. I’m a genius.* “See! I told you there were hairless dogs!”
“Can we take it out? Can we play with it?” Adam asked with shining eyes and a high-pitched voice very close to a squeal.

Kris looked around the store for an employee and saw a young woman in a blue apron stocking shelves nearby. He left Adam fawning over the puppy and approached the staff person. “Excuse me, ma’am, are we allowed to play with the dogs?”

“Of course!” she replied brightly. “We have a special enclosure just for that and the animals love the attention and exercise. Which one do you want to see?”

He told her and she walked through a door to the back of the cages, unlocked the enthusiastic puppy and brought its squirming little body out to the front. “Careful, this girl is pretty wiggly!”

As soon as the dog’s feet hit the playpen floor she went wild, jumping around and yipping at the two men, her little claws slipping on the linoleum in her excitement to play. “She’s so cute! And not a single hair!” Adam plunked down on the floor and laughed hysterically when the tiny brown puppy leapt into his lap and tried to lick his ear with her teeny pink tongue.

Kris settled to the ground and crossed his legs, feeling immensely pleased with himself for letting Adam grieve the way he needed to earlier without trying to fix it. He gave his boyfriend a quick kiss and joined in the play. This is a reward for me, too.

“Oooh, you’re a feisty one, aren’t ya girl,” Kris chuckled as she growled and pounced on her squeaky toy with all the ferocity of a teddy bear.

“Yes you are, you cute thing,” Adam cooed, trying to pet her as she raced around the pen. She got carried away at one point and slid right into the wall when she couldn’t stop in time. “Oh no! Are you okay, Fifi?” Adam said with genuine concern, but ‘Fifi’ seemed to be made of rubber, and she barked and started running again.

After a few minutes, the little one grew tired and allowed Adam to cuddle her like a baby. “So smooth,” he whispered as he stroked her skin, looking down at her with a soft smile. “I wish I could have her right now,” he sighed, “but I can wait.” He looked at Kris with meaning and a silent message passed between them. He’s talking about living together. Adam leaned forward until their lips met. “Thank you, angel,” he murmured. The sleepy puppy licked his chin and he giggled.

“You’re welcome, baby.” Kris vowed that they would get a puppy just like this one when he moved in with Adam.

When they finally left the pet store they were both starving, having abandoned their lunch completely, and decided to eat out for once. They grabbed a quick dinner at a little bistro and hurried home since it was getting a bit cold and Kris was very eager to try out his parents’ Christmas gift to Adam. Oh god…shiny metal, sharp edges... He shivered, and it wasn’t due to the chill in the air.

“You looked so adorable with that puppy,” Kris chuckled as they climbed the stairs.

“Hmm, I see that sparkle in your eye and I know it’s not about dogs, lover,” he said knowingly and pinched Kris on the ass.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he responded with raised eyebrows.

“Uh-huh.” Adam came to a halt, trapped him against the wall and pressed his groin into Kris’. “I’m talking about a cool, clean knife sliding down your smooth skin,” he leered. “You’re about as
innocent as the devil.”

Kris shuddered and moaned a little. Yessss. Want.

“That’s what I thought,” Adam whispered, nibbling on his ear and sucking it. “You dirty, dirty angel…I’m gonna tie you up and tear you apart.

“Oh god,” he groaned, “you’re killing me here. Please,” he begged as Adam began to grind into him right there on the stairs.

“Please what?” Adam hissed, pinning Kris’ hands to the wall while thrusting his clever hips in wicked circles.

Kris’ throat went dry and it was all he could do to get out his answer. “T-tie me up and tear me apart,” he breathed hoarsely. How does he do this? It’s like magic the way he can go from little boy to sexy beast. But there was no time to ponder this amazing transformation because Kris suddenly found himself being carried bridal style up the stairs, through the door and into the bedroom without preamble. Hot damn!

Adam tossed him on the far side of the bed and started crawling towards him, slinking like a cat with lust dripping from his lips as he spoke. “Now…my sexy…naughty…dirty angel, you’re going to watch me clean my blades before I used them to drive you wild.”

“F-fuck,” he whimpered, his brain already conjuring up images that made his hard cock twitch with desire.

“Mmmm,” Adam purred, hovering over the quaking man and taunting him with eyes that promised everything. “Big bad wolf loves his little rabbit, yes he does,” he murmured as he bent down and licked Kris’ lips.

The combination of warmth and sex oozing from him was doing crazy things to Kris. He bucked up into the air between their bodies, moaned into his lover’s mouth and breathed in his scent like it was a potent drug. “Tie me up…tie me…” he pleaded, thinking for the thousandth time that he was luckiest man on earth.

Adam grunted and bit Kris’ bottom lip, pulling at it until it popped out from his teeth and snapped back in place. “Stay,” he commanded gruffly and slunk from the bed with the same amount of grace he’d managed in his approach.

“Yes…yes…” Like I’d go anywhere. He loved this kind of submission as much as he’d come to love being a little more dominant. There was power in it, and as he watched Adam leave the room, he couldn’t help but rub himself just a few times to take the edge of the intense ache in his dick.

“You touched yourself, didn’t you, you bad rabbit,” Adam said with a smirk when he returned with a large chef’s knife, a small pairing knife, some rubbing alcohol and two clean cloths.

At the sight of the shining blades, Kris rolled right onto his stomach and started humping the bed.

“Hey now, they’ll be none of that!” said Adam sharply. He quickly set the knives and cleaning supplies on the dresser and manhandled Kris onto his back at once. “None of that, my love, or I won’t play with you,” he teased, pressing Kris’ shoulders into the bed and kissing him on the forehead. “Guess I’ll have to tie you up first.”
“Hmm, that’s much, much better,” Adam said after a few minutes and stepped back to admire the display.

Completely naked save for his necklace, handcuffed to the bed and wearing a leather cock ring, Kris writhed and squirmed in delight as he watched Adam slowly caress the knives with the cloth and alcohol. Oh god…oh fuck…that is the hottest, sexiest... He was suddenly reminded of the way that Adam had stroked the tie at Macy’s during their first encounter. Yes…just like that. Tugging at the metal cuffs just to feel their bite, he glanced down at his engorged length and knew he was in for the ride of his life.

After Adam was done wiping the knives dry, he sat down on the edge of the bed and looked at Kris intently. “Angel, say stop at any time, okay?”

Kris nodded and whined in his desperation for it to start already. “Please…”

Adam stood up and stripped down to his underwear, revealing his massive, mouth-watering bulge. He considered the two knives before choosing the smaller one and straddled Kris’ thighs so that his dick just nudged the cock ring.

A huge shudder ran up and down Kris’ body and he licked his lips, his breath coming in short, anticipatory bursts.

“Rabbit,” Adam whispered, his tone and manner pure sin again, “be good now.” He stuck out a finger and ran it up Kris’ purpling cock.

“Fuck!” Kris gasped and thrust his hips involuntarily, thoroughly aware that he would not feel the release his body craved for a long time. So hot…so fucking hot…and he doesn’t look afraid at what he’s about to do.

Adam hefted the blade in his hand and finally chose a spot. With long fingers curved around the handle, he gently touched the metal to the flesh right below Kris’ last rib. “Hold still,” he whispered, the lust and love mixed just right in his voice to create the perfect shade.

Oh god…oh god….oh! He caught his breath and didn’t move an inch as he felt the sharp edge bite his skin, but he was unable to stop the shivers of pleasure and pain from crawling all over him. It was an exquisite, heady combination. Eyes transfixed on the blade, he watched as it slid across his body and left a red scratch in its wake. When Adam lifted his hand, Kris exhaled in a rush and moaned loudly. “Touch me…touch me, please!”

“Hmmm.” Adam smirked, stuck out his tongue and flicked it at the head of Kris’ dick.

It was torture, wonderful, delicious torture. Every time the knife approached, Kris held his breath, his insides screaming with bliss until it was removed again. And then he was submitted to Adam’s evil teasing and playing with his bound cock.

“FUCK!” The last two draws of the knife had left behind thin lines of blood and Kris was nearing his limit, frantic for stimulation to his dick now. He yanked at the handcuffs blindly and begged Adam with his eyes. “I can’t…I can’t take anymore,” he panted, “please…take it off…take it off!” His entire body trembled from head to toe and his torso was a plane of fiery marks where the knives had played.
Adam couldn’t seem to keep up his act in the face of such scorching need. “So gorgeous…so beautiful,” he groaned, swiveling his hips so that his bulge rubbed against Kris’ dick, but not enough.

“Please!” Kris sobbed, arching off the bed and trying to rut into him.

But Adam’s devilry knew no bounds. He slithered down to straddle Kris’ knees, bent over and took that throbbing, pulsing, angry dick into his mouth and sucked.

Kris began to weep and he pulled so hard on his bonds that he felt the metal cut his wrists. He was beyond words as Adam worked his mouth up and down; all he could do was cry and moan and wait for the ring to come off. After a full minute or torment, Adam finally unsnapped the leather and swallowed Kris whole.

“ADAM!” he screamed loud enough to tear his throat and slammed his cum-pumping cock up into that sinful mouth. It seemed to go on forever, hot liquid spurting from his slit to be guzzled down by the wicked man between his legs. At last Kris lay there shaking in the aftershocks of pleasure and stared up into his lover’s eyes that were burning with heat.

Adam collapsed and pressed his freckled lips right to Kris’ ear. “You made me come in my underwear,” he hissed.

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Over an hour later the two men were cozied up in bed with bowls of ice cream, watching one of Adam’s favorite movies, ‘Pete’s Dragon.’ Adam sat leaning against the headboard with Kris curled up in his arms. “This part is so cute,” Adam giggled after licking his spoon, which he clearly did with innocence but it still looked sexy to Kris. Adorable, sexy…everything. He sighed in contentment and watched the dragon and the boy play tic tac toe on Elliot’s belly. Every time he moved, Kris felt the cuts smart on his chest and thought about how incredible it had been. Pleasure, pain, love, trust, power, submission…it was a dizzying blend of emotions that he couldn’t wait to feel again. He knew Adam had done it out of love, but he was obviously turned on by it, too. I can’t believe he came in his pants. Kris was damn proud of that fact.

“Angel?”

“Hmmm?”

Adam pressed pause on the remote and kissed Kris behind his ear with cold, sweet lips. “I’ve been wondering…do you think we should, you know, get tested?”

“Huh. Well, I’m pretty sure I’m clean…”

“Me, too, but I want to be sure, and I want to feel you, lover,” he said softly.

Kris shivered and sucked in a breath at how the sensation made his wounded flesh tingle. “I want to feel you, too. Let’s do it.” He thought it was amazing how they always seemed to know when it was time to kiss, and as he turned his head back, Adam cupped his jaw and closed the gap between their mouths. Kris slipped his tongue out and licked his favorite spot. My freckles….mine.
“I hate this.”

If only I could escape to that tropical island. Adam studied the painting on Sheila’s office wall for the thousandth time; a fantasy land he had so often dreamt of going where he could find peace, innocence, happiness…all lies. You know you’d feel nothing but pain as soon as your feet hit the sand. “Ever since the beach last week, so much reminds me of how broken I feel,” he said quietly as he stared at the deceptive scene. “It’s like, for a while there I was pissed and kind of confident, and now I’m more sad. I mean I’m still angry as hell, but sometimes even getting angry makes me sad because I get mad at stupid things I shouldn’t like Brian and…and…they hung out without me on Sunday and…oh just screw it!”

Adam turned away from the taunting picture and plopped back into the leather chair. “I’m crying too much and I don’t like it,” he finished and crossed his arms tightly to his body, his mouth a thin line. But he wasn’t really done yet; there had been so much consuming his thoughts lately that he had to get it all out. “Plus I can’t figure out this neediness thing,” he pushed out through gritted teeth. “I mean what the hell? So I’m not supposed to need Kris, but everyone keeps telling me that it’s okay to need help? What kind of crap is that?” He was finding it very difficult not to swear.

Sheila uncrossed her legs and leaned forward. “Let’s just take one thing at a time, alright?” she suggested in a calm voice that made Adam’s jaw unclench a bit.

He nodded sharply. Please help me sort this all out. I’m so tired.

“Let’s start with the being sad a lot part. Where do you think that is coming from?”

“I was hoping you could tell me,” he sighed heavily, abandoning his gruff attitude because it just took too much energy to keep it up. “But I know that’s now how it works around here.”

“No, it isn’t,” she confirmed with a knowing smile. “Why don’t you give me an example of feeling sad?”

He told her about last Friday, how Brian had called Kris and the whole episode that had followed. As he spoke, he sunk lower and deeper in the chair and his voice grew ever more quiet until at last he reached the part where he’d remembered about wanting to die and meet his grandfather. “Kris was amazing,” he whispered, “he just held me and didn’t say anything and let me cry, but…” Adam dropped his gaze and stared at his lap, unsure of how to finish the sentence. He started playing with his bracelet unconsciously.

“It’s hard for you to do that.”

“Yes,” he told her and began rubbing at his temples. “With Ali and my mom, I never held back and I don’t want to with Kris either, it’s just harder to let go sometimes. ‘Course, I didn’t really have a choice that day…I couldn’t help it, I needed him,” he said sadly, “just like at the emergency room.”

Sheila considered him for a moment and then seemed to reach a decision. “Alright, we’re going to come back to that, but let’s refocus for a minute on the sad feelings. It sounds to me like there were at
least two different kinds of sadness in that story you just told. Can you tell them apart?”

_I just want a nap. Fuck, come on, Lambert, this is how you get better. Focus!_ “I think so. At first I was sad because I got pissed by the Brian thing…and I didn’t want to be mad because it would mean that I’m still not better,” he grumbled.

Sheila sighed softly, but her eyes were full of sympathy. “You are, and have always been, too hard on yourself. You know that, don’t you?”

“I suppose.”

“There’s no supposing about it.” She leveled her green eyes at Adam and began to speak in a calm but resolute voice. “When I first met you, you were angry with yourself for trusting people, and for years since then you’ve criticized yourself for being ‘damaged,’ as you put it, which by the way isn’t even accurate, and now you’re making good progress towards healing and yet you’re still not satisfied.” Sheila sat back in her chair and raised her brow as if to say, ‘your turn.’

Adam found it amusing, and he straightened up from his slouch, lips twitching. “Well tell me how you really feel,” he finally said with a chuckle.

She laughed quietly and shook her head. “I’m sure that everyone from your mother to Alisan to Kris has told you this, but Adam please, relax. You’re doing an incredible job, but you bit off more than you could chew last week and it seems like you’re trying too hard.”

“Of course I’m trying hard,” he said firmly, “how am I going to get better if I don’t?”

“You’re not listening,” she said in a patient tone, “I said _too_ hard. The expectations you’ve set for yourself are so high that of course you’re going to feel disappointed and sad when you don’t reach them. I’m thrilled that you are so determined, but you’re setting yourself up. It’s like trying to bench press three hundred pounds the very first time you decide to lift weights.”

But all this conjured up for Adam was images of his sweaty boyfriend pumping iron. _Mmmmm_. He smiled a bit dreamily and Sheila could tell that her analogy obviously hadn’t worked. “Or…” she cast her eyes about the room for a moment before continuing, “…you wouldn’t attempt a ridiculously complicated recipe and expect it to turn out perfect the first time.”

“Now that I can relate to,” he snorted, “When I was little I tried to make all these crazy things and ended up burning them or making mush.” The corner of his mouth turned up as he recalled those times in the kitchen.

“Exactly!” Sheila said with enthusiasm, gesturing her hands at him for added emphasis, “and how did you get better?”

“I learned to read recipes and then I practiced them a lot,” he said as if the answer should be obvious, “but I don’t use cookbooks very much anymore.”

Sheila scooted to the edge of her seat, nodding and looking very pleased. “That’s right, now you can experiment and try new dishes and they usually come out pretty good, right?”

“Well…yeah…” Adam leaned forward and gripped the leather chair. He could almost feel things connecting in his brain and knew that this was going to be big somehow. _We’re nearly there._
“Because you have a solid set of skills and successes to rely on, but I’m sure there were many ups and downs along the way before you became so proficient.”

“Tons! But I just kept at it…I wasn’t hard on myself and my mom encouraged me all the time.” A slow, bright smile began to stretch across his mouth until it was a full on beam. “Just like you do, and Kris and Ali…I’m going to learn how to cook again,” he said with a wide grin as it finally sunk in.

“Yes you are, Adam,” she returned with a huge smile of her own. “Now, do you ever stop learning how to cook?”

Adam shook his head quickly and the excitement of discovering something that might actually aid him in feeling less helpless was clear on his face. “No, and I know where you’re going with that. I get it now…it’s not like I can just flip a switch and be all fixed!” I need to offer her more money. To many, this simple analogy might not seem so important, but to a person who is flailing around in the dark it was something to cling to, a reminder when he lost his way and started succumbing to a bleak view of his future.

“Precisely! And working on your emotional health is much harder than learning how to cook, so you’re going to need to be extra patient with yourself.” Sheila re-crossed her legs and looked at him intently, as if by sheer force of will she could make Adam be less self-critical.

“I’ll do my best,” he said seriously, still buzzing a bit but knowing that it was much easier to talk about than to actually do.

“I know you will,” Sheila told him, “just try to use your stubborn tendencies for good instead of evil,” she finished with a smirk.

Adam chuckled and pulled over the footstool so he could rest his long legs on it, feeling much more relaxed than when the session had started. Speaking of cooking, I think I’ll make him mac and cheese tonight. Can’t wait to see what happens when he finds out! He tried not to think about it too much because getting a hard on in therapy? No thank you. Sheila started to speak again and he shifted his attention.

“Before you leave today we’re going to make a recipe together, a treatment plan of goals for you to focus on which I think will help you feel even more in control of this process.”

“Sounds good,” he said and nodded.

“But first, I want us to go back and look at the other kind of sadness you felt last Friday.”

Fuck. I was hoping she’d forgotten about that. I should have known better. His face fell as the happy vibes seemed to whoosh out of his chest all at once. Leaning back in the warm, comforting leather, Adam closed his eyes for a moment and gathered his courage. “It’s like there’s this ocean of sadness inside of me now,” he said softly without moving, morbidly noting his choice of the word ‘ocean.’ “I feel like I’m drowning in it sometimes.” It’s okay if I cry…it’s okay, he tried to convince himself as the wetness began to build behind his eyelids.

Sheila didn’t seem to mind that he wasn’t looking at her. “Adam, you know that this ocean has been there for a long time.” Although he couldn’t see her, he could tell that her face was full of concern. “Obviously you’ve become an expert at concealing your pain. Do you remember all those years ago when I told you how important it was to grieve?”
He made a noise of assent, but no further words were needed because they both knew all too well how hard he’d shoved it away. Even when it overwhelmed him enough to land him in the hospital, Adam had always tried to tuck the grief right back in, and his habits hadn’t changed in the least since then. Sex had become his means of controlling it along with the fear and shame.

Adam sniffed and squeezed his closed eyes tight enough that a few tears trickled onto his cheek. He swallowed past the lump in his throat and reminded himself that he felt safe in this room.

“Whether it’s just that time in your growth or if it’s the security of having someone like Kris with you, that ocean is leaking out,” said Sheila. “I suspect that both reasons are true, and you can either let it out or attempt to push it down again, but I guarantee that will take more energy to try to stop it.”

He opened his eyes a crack and saw that she was waiting for him to respond. With a huge amount of effort, Adam sat up and cleared his throat. “Okay,” he said simply. It wasn’t like he’d be very successful at fighting it anyway, not when so many fissures in the damn were starting to appear.

“Okay? Is that it?”

“Yeah. I’ll try not to fight it, at least when I’m with certain people.” There’s strength in vulnerability. It was a phrase that Sheila had said to him countless times when he was younger.

She smiled and leaned over to push the tissues closer to him. “Trust me, the tidal waves will become ripples over time.”

After a good cry, Adam and his therapist discussed the problem of neediness and the difference between accepting support and feeling like he couldn’t breathe when Kris wasn’t around. She also reminded him that the more he loved himself, the less dependent he would feel. Now that is going to be challenge. “You’re going to give me homework again, aren’t you?” She chortled and said that he knew her too well.

When they’d finished working on his ‘recipe,’ he told her that he’d secured a new job and had started visiting the pet store to play with Fifi when he was alone and felt down.

“That is fantastic, Adam! You see how well you’re doing? I can think of countless people who would have fallen into never leaving the house and relying on others for financial support. But here you are, using good coping skills and getting back on your feet.”

Adam was horrified at the idea of mooching off his parents forever. “No fucking way! Oops, sorry, Sheila,” he apologized when she looked a little taken aback by his language.

“It’s fine,” she laughed. “You’re a passionate, determined person and I’m so proud of you.”

By the time he left her office, Adam felt a little lighter and steadier as he walked to his car with his treatment plan clutched firmly in hand. I have a plan. He stopped at Ritz Camera in the mall on his way home to pick up the Christmas photos he’d dropped off yesterday. Even though he’d already uploaded them onto his computer and had spent hours with Kris last Saturday looking at them, Adam wanted the physical prints in his hand. There was one that he wanted to put in his box and he’d ordered three copies of that particular photo.

As he waited in line, Adam thought about surprising Kris for lunch. I miss him so fucking much. He hadn’t been lying to Sheila about feeling like he couldn’t breathe sometimes when they were apart, and he wondered how they would know when it was the right time to move in together. He sighed
deeply and decided he could wait until his boyfriend came over that evening despite the almost physical need to see him. *Got to go find that mac and cheese recipe that Kim gave me.*

The first thing he did when he got home, however, was to pull out his grandfather’s box from underneath his bed. He sat there looking at it for at least ten minutes, thinking about all the stories he’d heard about the man who had died of a heart attack only months before Adam was born. “I know how much you wanted to meet me,” he said aloud as he traced the patterns in the wood, “and there was a time when I was desperate to join you, but…” He paused and picked up the photo of him and Kris gazing lovingly into each others eyes, “…our introductions will have to wait… hopefully until I’m a very old man,” he finished with a soft smile. He started to hum the melody of the angel song he was writing and gently put the picture in the box.

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*Eggs, milk, butter, noodles...got all that...hmmm, red rind cheese? Guess I’ll have to go out again.* While he was shopping, Adam couldn’t help but think about the next day. Since it was Friday and Kris didn’t have to work, they’d decided that after their morning workout they would go get tested together at a local drop in clinic. Although he’d never had sex without a condom and never missed his annual test, Adam was still nervous. *What if one of us has something?*

He told himself not to worry and tried to focus instead on how it would feel to be inside Kris without any barrier, but this was so arousing, so distracting that he ended up walking right into an old lady’s shopping cart. “Oh! I’m so sorry ma’am,” he said, massaging his hip, but the grey haired woman just laughed. “It’s fine dear. Something, or someone was obviously on your mind.” She winked and hobbled away with her cart. *What the hell? Oh...* He looked down at his groin and chuckled, amazed that he hadn’t scared the poor dear with the monster bulge threatening to burst right through his zipper.

“Missed you…so much…you have no idea…” As soon as the door closed behind Kris, Adam was on him like an octopus, kissing and hugging and groping him until they both ran out of air.

“Damn!” Kris puffed. Their eyes locked and they stood there breathing heavily, looking exactly like two bulls about to charge at each other. “Race you to the bedroom,” said the brown-haired one in all seriousness, but just then he lifted his nose into the air and gave a great sniff. As he caught the scent, his eyes went wide and then he narrowed them like a cat.

“I believe,” Adam said with a smug grin, your exact words were ‘I’ll make your head spin with pleasure.’”

Kris stepped up to him, pulled his face down and licked his jaw from chin to ear. “That I did,” he whispered huskily, sending chills down Adam’s spine and making him want to forget all about dinner. He gasped as Kris pressed a palm to his crotch and squeezed him firmly.

“N-not such a rabbit tonight, are you?” Adam stuttered, feeling insanely turned on by his lover’s aggressive behavior. *Fucking hot!*

“No,” Kris replied before rising up to his toes and licking across Adam’s lips. “I’m a wild animal, and I will make good on my promise just as soon as we’re done eating,” he leered and groped him again.
“Shit,” Adam breathed, “let’s fucking get to it then!” He grabbed Kris by the wrist, dragged him into the kitchen and practically shoved him into the chair. Goddamn that was sexy! I want more of that!

Kris chuckled and scooted closer to the table. “Not so fast, baby, I want to enjoy this properly.”

“Tease.” Well there’s a first. I’m usually the one doing the teasing.

Kris winked at him. “You know you love me.”

Adam thought that he’d done the recipe justice, and as he took the entrée out of the oven and set it on the trivet in the center of the table, he felt like he was presenting a gift of love to his boyfriend.

“Wow! It looks amazing!” Kris exclaimed when he saw the bubbling, slightly browned cheese and the yellow and orange hues of a summer sunset swirled throughout the glass casserole dish. He looked at Adam with deep affection in his eyes and for a while the wild animal seemed to vanish. “Thank you, baby.”

“You are so welcome, angel,” Adam said with pride and it suddenly occurred to him that it was a little easier to delay sex now than it used to be.

Kris made every noise and expression of enjoyment that Adam had hoped for as he dug into the macaroni and cheese. “Oh my god, this is perfect! You got it just right. In fact, don’t you dare tell my mom this, but it’s better,” he said with a guilty expression. “What did you do differently?”

“I added a special ingredient,” Adam answered, and when Kris quirked an eyebrow at him, he explained, “When I mixed the eggs and milk together, I sprinkled in a dash of love.” What a corny thing to say, Lambert, since when are you such a sap? Shut up…I did make it with love.

Clang! Kris’ fork fell to his plate and rattled a few times.

“What’s the matter?” asked Adam, but Kris didn’t respond; he merely pushed back his chair, walked over in silence and tilted Adam’s head down.

“You are the most amazing man I have ever met,” he said heatedly, staring into Adam’s eyes with desire and love before leaning in to kiss him hard.

After having all of his breath stolen away, Adam was finally released by his hot boyfriend, who returned to his chair and started eating again with slow, sensual bites. Whatever has gotten into him tonight, I’m fucking loving it! “Thank you, angel,” he said in a winded voice. “I think I’ll start making this every time you come over!”

Kris chuckled a bit wickedly and licked his fork up and down while sending bolts electricity to straight Adam’s dick with his eyes.

The meal was almost torturous. Kris was such a bad tease that Adam could hardly eat; all he could think about was ‘dessert’ and the evil man taunting him from across the table, and he had to admit that the role reversal in this game they were playing was wildly exciting. Finally Kris took his last deliberately unhurried bite and licked his lips as if they were coated in honey. He giggled just a little bit at the affect he was having on Adam, but somehow that only made him look sexier.

Fuck. The pressure in Adam’s pants was painful and only growing worse as he watched that pink
tongue sweep around and around full lips. “I can’t take this anymore,” he said in a shaky voice, slamming his hands on the table and staring daggers of lust at Kris.

“Oh no? Guess I’m just have to take care of that,” Kris smirked. He rose from his chair and held out his hand to Adam. “Come with me.”

Adam leapt to his feet and almost stumbled in his eagerness to follow his lover into the bedroom. When he reached the end of the bed, Kris stepped back and looked him up and down. “Strip,” he said in a voice that was commanding but still warm. Adam gaped at him and, feeling like he was under some kind of irresistible spell, he tore his clothes off and scrambled onto the bed. Jesus… fucking…fuck! It seemed that his brain was only capable of mental swearing as he lay flat on his back waiting…waiting.

Kris pulled his t-shirt over his head, revealing chiseled muscles and a flat torso that was already making Adam’s head spin with pleasure just by looking at that gorgeous body. And then, to Adam’s surprise and immense delight, Kris put on a one-minute show right there in the bedroom. Without even blushing, he began to stroke himself through his jeans and raised his other arm behind his head, bent at the elbow to show off the lines and planes of his taut figure.

Adam’s eyes bugged right out of his head and he didn’t think they would ever go back in. And when Kris shoved a hand down his pants and swiveled his hips a little, there was no way Adam could stop himself from clenching his throbbing dick. It was exactly like being at a strip club. Where the hell did he learn how to do that?! He’s been holding out on me!

But Adam wasn’t going to be allowed to jerk off. Kris stopped his little display abruptly and climbed onto the bed. “I think it’s payback time,” he purred into Adam’s ear. Oh shit…if he’s talking about the knifeplay teasing…I’m fucking doomed.

“I’m gonna suck you so hard,” Kris growled, “so good…and this finger…” he said as he trailed a digit down Adam’s chest to his inner thigh, “…this finger is gonna drive you insane.”

Adam was indeed doomed, because underneath all the adorable cuteness, his boyfriend was apparently a very evil man with plans to bring Adam to the edge over and over again without letting him come.

Twenty minutes later, his long legs were hanging over Kris’ shoulders, his enormous cock was being ravaged by the hottest mouth in existence, and his wet hole was being plundered by one slick finger touching the spot repeatedly. “yes… yes… oh… ohhhh!… fuck!… noooooo!” For the third time in a row, Kris stopped just as Adam was about to explode. “You wicked…cruel…” he panted, gripping the bed sheets so hard that his knuckles were white.

Kris smiled with deceptive sweetness as he squeezed the base of Adam’s cock. “I love you, baby,” he grinned as he wiggled his finger inside and moved it everywhere except the place Adam was desperate for him to touch. “But I won’t make you beg.” And with that, he opened his mouth obscenely wide and clamped it down like vice on Adam’s engorged meat, sucking and licking and swallowing it all the way down his throat.

“Shit …oh god…don’t stop! Don’t…”

Kris rammed his middle finger up right into Adam’s prostate and began pulsing it against the spot… again… again… gagging on hard cock… fucking Adam with his finger…in and out… faster… faster…
“Kris!…yesyesyesyes…oh my god…Oh myy godddd! UHHH!” Adam arched his back a foot in the air as the pleasure built to an almost unbearable level before slamming into his body, Kris drinking him, sucking him down through the orgasm that left him limp and shuddering. Although every fiber of his being wanted to pounce on his lover like an animal, Adam couldn’t seem to make his muscles move. “Fuck…fuck…fuck…” he gasped, his chest rising and falling painfully.

Kris sat back and smiled. Somehow there was cum his cheekbone and Adam wanted nothing more than to lick it off, but his body wasn’t listening. “Come down here,” he rasped. Kris obliged, still in his jeans, and lowered himself to hover over Adam, who took him by the face and lapped at the escaped remnant of lust. “I want to take care of you so badly,” he said breathily.

Kris just winked and rolled over onto his back, popped open his pants and pushed them down to his knees with his briefs. His dick sprang up, rigid and leaking, and he grasped it firmly and began to pump it with his eyes closed. “Adam…oh god, baby…” he murmured.

What is he imagining right now? Although he was completely spent, the sight of Kris jerking off like this was enough to make his soft dick twitch.

“Oh my god! Angel…so sexy…so fucking hot…”

“Adam …keep talking to me like that…please!” Kris moaned.

It was like phone sex only Kris was right here pleasuring himself and it was enough to make Adam groan with longing. But he didn’t touch; he was enjoying this show too much to interfere. He had no idea what was going on inside that beautiful head, so he just used the words he’d been unable to string together a few minutes ago. “Kris, you wild, sexy beast…driving me insane like this…you fucking animal…push it in harder…faster…”

Kris gave a huge shudder and went absolutely crazy with his hand. “Yes! Take it…take it!”

“Holy shit! Angel…so sexy…so fucking hot…”

“Adam …keep talking to me like that…please!” Kris moaned.

Oh my god! He’s fucking me in his mind! Adam rolled over onto his side so he could whisper into Kris’ ear, because this…this was just too hot not to go with. “Give it to me, baby…shove that hard cock of yours right up my ass…yesss…feels so good…”

Kris’ eyes suddenly flew wide open and met Adam’s gaze, but Adam just grinned wickedly and said, “Fuck me.”

“Shit!” Kris cried out and came hard all over himself.

Well now. Looks like I’m not the only one having those fantasies. Adam leaned over, stuck out his long tongue and began licking Kris’ belly with little flicks and swipes until it was clean. Not wanting to miss a drop, he moved on to his lover’s fingers and then tip of his dick, making Kris moan and shudder until it was all gone. “Beast,” Adam whispered as he scooped up his man and kissed him silly.

The night was still young when the couple had finally recovered from their sexual escapade, and they decided that it was warm enough to take a walk downtown for some coffee and dessert. As they swung their clasped hands in the air, Adam thought about his boyfriend’s behavior that evening and how erotic it had been, but he also recalled that Kris had looked a little worried afterwards. “Angel?”
“Hmm?”

“I just want you to know that what you did tonight…all of it, was probably the hottest thing I’ve ever seen. I mean, I know you’ve been building your confidence and everything, but I had no idea…” He smiled, shaking his head and kicked at a pebble in his path. “And where did you learn how to put on a show like that?” he chuckled.

Kris grinned and blushed a little, but he didn’t answer Adam’s question. “I hope that it was okay, um, that last part,” he said as scratched the back of his neck. “I didn’t mean to get carried away like that.”

Adam came to a halt and drew his lover close to his body. A slight breeze swept around them as they stood there face to face, picking up stray leaves and bits of paper as it went. Kris shivered and tucked himself into Adam’s arms. “Kris,” he began, speaking into soft brown hair just above the ear, “you’re not alone. I’ve been having dreams about it.”

“Really?”

“Mm-hm, and I’m not sure when or if I’ll ever be ready to go that far, but there’s nothing wrong with fantasizing about it.”

Kris looked up at him and smiled a bit sheepishly. “It was kind of hot, wasn’t it?”

“Hell yeah, baby…hell yeah.”

They continued on their way until a glowing, pink neon ‘coffee’ sign came into view, flickering and buzzing in the dusk. Once inside, they shed their coats and snuggled up on the same side of a booth. Their server, Ashley, was a friendly young woman whose personality fit the laid back atmosphere to a tee. “Two coffees,” said Adam, “one black and one with a little sugar and cream,” he finished, winking at Kris and thinking how awesome it was that he knew things like how his boyfriend took coffee. Or how much he giggles if I kiss that one spot on the back of his neck. Ashley asked if they wanted anything else and they ordered a piece of cherry pie to share.

“So how was your therapy this morning?” Kris asked after taking a sip of the steaming hot liquid and smacking his lips appreciatively.

Adam sighed softly as he put his arm around the smaller man. “It was a mixed bag, but Sheila and I made a treatment plan that totally kicks ass. Mmm, god I love the coffee here.” Adam always took his coffee black because he enjoyed evaluating the quality of raw bean flavor.

Kris wiggled closer and when he spoke, his voice was a tad hesitant. “I’d love to hear about it, I mean…I don’t want to pry or anything…”

“Of course I’ll tell you.” He wasn’t about to go into all the details of his session, but he had no problem sharing his goals. Sheila said I should anyway, so he can help support and encourage me. “My first goal is to be able to walk on the beach again.”

“Wow, really?” Kris sat up and turned to look at Adam. “That’s so great!”

“Yep.” He went on to talk about gradual exposure and how Sheila had recommended that he start with listening to a CD of ocean sounds. “And then my next goal is to be able to accept help but not
feel like I can’t manage without you. That’s a really hard one,” he said quietly. “I have to learn how to be more social with other people and…work on my insecurities.” There was no need to explain those parts since both men knew why they were so important. “You’re going to hang out with Brian again this weekend, aren’t you?”

“I am,” Kris answered, looking like he was trying not to feel guilty. “Is that okay?”

“Sure!” he said brightly, but his tone was so fake that Kris actually laughed. “Fine,” he said a bit grumpily, “I hate it, okay?”

“But how come, Adam? What’s the difference between Brian and Matt?”

“I don’t know…he just seems so excited to be with you and he’s gay and…” He knew he was being ridiculous about this, but he couldn’t help the jealousy that twisted at his gut.

Cooking. I feel how I feel and I’m going to move through this.

“Adam,” said Kris gently, “he’s a kid. Last weekend we sat down and talked and he’s just confused and scared.”

Adam nodded and sighed. “I know. Don’t worry about it, angel, really. Have a good time…I’m working on it. I’ll probably go visit Fifi that day, and I’ve got to practice for opening night at my new job next weekend.” He took another sip of the black brew and ran his finger around the edge of the cup. “Anyway, my last goal…well…” His brows furrowed as he tried not to look at the cracks in the damn.

Kris pressed a warm coffee kiss to Adam’s lips and offered him a loving smile. It was enough to help him continue, but just then Ashley returned with a piece of pie and two forks for them. It was extremely cozy, sitting there drinking coffee and eating the sweet pastry together. I could just change the subject. No, you can do this…it’s all right, Adam. After few bites, he took a deep breath and put down his fork. “Lastly, I have to let myself grieve.” The words hung in the air like a precious gift to a world that could be so cruel. “Whatever feelings I have about what happened, I have to let them out,” he mumbled sadly.

“I’m here for you, my beautiful man, any time,” said Kris with sincerity and grinned when Adam kissed the top of his head.

Despite the sorrow that was creeping into his chest like ivy, Adam felt his heart swell with love for the patient, giving person nestled under his arm. “You know, I can’t wait until Valentine’s Day next month.” Wow…just wow. The mere thought that he would actually have someone to celebrate with chased the sad vines away in an instant.

“Um, yeah…I guess,” said Kris, sounding about as enthusiastic as a man being led to the gallows. He hung his head and started playing with his fork.

That was unexpected. “Don’t you like Valentine’s Day?”

Kris grunted and used the tines to push a cherry around the plate. “Bad memories,” was all he said.

“Hey, look at me.” Adam lifted Kris’ chin and found that he was peering into watery eyes full of pain. “What’s this all about?” I can’t stand to see him hurting, whatever the reason.

“Almost every year I’ve either been alone or unhappy on that day and…and…” Kris sniffed and
dropped his gaze, “last year… Ethan, he… I caught him in bed with another man… on Valentine’s Day,” Adam gasped and was about to respond, but Kris didn’t seem to be finished. “And I took him back… twice… and he still left me in the end.”

“Oh god, baby, I’m so sorry!” he exclaimed in sympathy and hugged Kris tightly, but then he grew angry at the prick who’d been so heartless to his lover. “What a fucking asshole! You should have kicked his ass to the curb!”

“I know. I was such a pathetic sucker,” he said miserably, “I let so many people hurt me… such an idiot.”

“Don’t you do that, Kris.” Adam cupped his face and kissed away the bit of wetness on his cheek. “Take it from an expert, it won’t help to be down on yourself like that. Look at who you are now! I mean… Jesus, look at what you did tonight! You’re a fucking wild, brave man and you’d never take that shit from anyone!” he said fiercely.

“Amazing how passionately you can say these things to him… might want to try that on yourself someday. He pulled out Kris’ pendant from beneath his shirt and held it up. “You see this? Do you remember why I got this for you?”

A tiny smile tugged at Kris’ mouth. “Yeah, because I’m high risk.”

“Damn right you are! You nearly killed me earlier,” Adam chuckled.

“Baby, give me some good memories for Valentine’s this year?” Kris asked, his eyes as imploring as a sad puppy who is begging for food.

“You know I will, lover,” he said in a softer voice, “you know I will.” Adam kissed him tenderly, trying to transmit as much affection and reassurance as he could with his lips. “Come on, I’m taking you home.” He paid the bill and took Kris by the hand, thinking that he wanted nothing more than to lay him down and make slow, sweet love to him.

Not too long after they returned to the apartment, Adam was covering Kris in soft kisses and caresses, licks and nips that made him sigh, giggle and groan. “I’m going to worship your body,” Adam murmured into his lover’s right thigh.

Chapter 39

So, if I move a my hips just like that… Kris stood in the middle of his apartment living room, squinting at the TV that usually displayed football or movies but had never seen the likes of the DVD currently playing until very recently. He poked his tongue out in concentration for a minute, moving to the sensual beats coming from the small speakers of the television. The striking lines of his fit body curved and stretched as he danced in place and grazed one hand over the fly of his jeans. Mmm, the way he dropped down right there… so sexy… Adam would love that. After a few more minutes of copying the man on the screen, Kris went into the kitchen, dragged a chair back to the living room and began to watch the next part of the video. Wow… yeah… I think I can do that. He turned the chair around and envisioned Adam sitting in front of him. This is going to be so damn hot. Now straddling the seat, he mimicked the slow gyrations of the male model until his imagination suddenly took over and he started to thrust his groin repeatedly, moaning softly with eyes closed and thinking of his gorgeous lover beneath him. Shiny lips… freckled skin… slicked open body… oh
He bit his lip and gripped the back of the chair as he drove Adam crazy in his mind.

If anyone could have seen Kris’ writhing form and blissed out face, they would have been shocked at how long he managed not to touch himself. As it was, he had to knock on Matt’s door on the way to his room to give the all clear. “You can come out now,” he called in a strained voice and hurried to the bedroom. Adam’s wide blue eyes and panting mouth taunted him until he finally unzipped his jeans with a sigh of relief and gave in to the fantasies surging throughout his brain. So tight...oh god... The images were so powerful that it only took a minute of stroking for Kris’ body to shudder and contract in pleasure before spilling its seed into his hand.

After cleaning himself up, Kris checked the time and saw that there was still an hour left before Brian would arrive. Enough time to try that recipe out. The song is nearly finished, too. He couldn’t help but feel a bit proud of the birthday plans he was putting together for Adam. Never before had Kris made such efforts for a boyfriend; even his attempts to do everything possible to keep Ethan from leaving fell drastically short, especially if he included the time spent on Adam’s Christmas present.

Matt came into the kitchen right as Kris was trying to figure out how much seasoning he was supposed to rub into a fillet of salmon. It just says some. How much is some?

“Holy shit!” Matt exclaimed when he saw what was going on. “You’re cooking!”

“So?”

“So you never cook! And no one cooks at ten in the morning on a Sunday,” he stated matter of fact as he grabbed a bowl and some cereal.

Kris made his best guess with the seasoning and reached into the cabinet for a skillet. “Well I’ve got to practice. I’m making it for Adam’s birthday and I don’t want to mess it up...what?” He turned around when Matt made a noise of astonishment.

“I promise never to doubt your love for him like, ever,” he said, shaking his head and starting to chuckle.

Kris smirked and told him to go away so he could concentrate. “Heat pan on medium and brush it with olive oil. Huh...brush?” Although he’d asked his mom what brand of oil to get, apparently he hadn’t looked at the recipe closely enough before going shopping earlier this morning. He pulled open drawer after drawer, but nothing resembling a brush presented itself. Cursing under his breath, Kris turned on the burner to something around ‘medium,’ tipped the bottle over the pan and moved the oil around a bit with their only spatula. Hope I used enough. He put the fish in skin side down and waited for several minutes.

As he watched the salmon sizzle, Kris rubbed the inside of his elbow where the nurse at the drop in clinic had taken his blood two days ago. He and Adam had nervously waited together, their hands clasped tightly until first one and then the other had been called to give a blood and urine sample. Although some of the results might be back from the lab in as little as a few days, they would have to wait up to two weeks for the HIV test. I know we’ll be clean, I just know it...and then we can have sex without a condom. A delicious chill ran down his spine just thinking about how it would feel to have Adam inside him like that.

“Ouch! Shit! What the—” Kris jumped back as scalding hot drops of oil peppered his bare arm. “Crap!” he shouted, whipping his hand around and quickly turning off the stove. “Oh my god...” The recipe was called blackened salmon, but he was pretty sure it hadn’t meant the mess that was
now stuck to the bottom of the pan. *Guess I had the heat up too high. Man, how does he do this stuff?* As he scraped the bits of fish into the garbage, Kris felt extremely glad that there were still two weeks to go until Adam’s birthday.

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Eighteen-year-old Brian was a tall, good looking young man with blonde hair and hazel eyes that sparkled happily when Kris opened the door to let him in. “Hi, Kris!” he beamed, wiping his feet on the mat before crossing into the apartment.

“Hey Brian,” Kris returned with a small chuckle at his bright, eager face. *Reminds me of Fifi.* “Come on in.” He told him to sit down and went to the kitchen to grab some drinks. “Pepsi okay?”

“Sure, that’s fine,” came the chipper voice. Brian had filled Kris in last week about his experiences so far, saying that he’d been with girls before and had traded blow jobs with guys in the locker room several times since he was sixteen. After two years he felt like he was supposed to have it all figured out, but he was still obviously confused. Brian hoped that maybe if he dated a guy it would help him determine if he was really gay, or maybe bisexual since he seemed to enjoy being with both sexes. Kris had tried to assure him that there was no deadline for self-discovery.

He let Brian have the couch and pulled the armchair around to face him. “So, how’s it going?” he asked after taking a sip of soda.

“Well, kind of okay,” Brian responded a little uncertainly and rubbed his nose. “I asked Josh to the senior dance.”

“That’s great!” Kris said in an encouraging tone. “Isn’t he the one you said you’ve had your eye on? The cute, short guy?”

“That’s great!” Kris said in an encouraging tone. “Isn’t he the one you said you’ve had your eye on? The cute, short guy?”

“Yup,” he grinned. “It’ll be the first time that I don’t have to worry about how to compliment my date,” Brian laughed, but then his mouth turned down a fraction. “I’m actually really nervous about going with him though. I’ve never been with a guy in public before…people are going to stare and I know that Josh is scared, too. What if…what if they call us names or…” He paused and swallowed, “…I’ve heard of guys getting beaten up, even at my school,” he finished quietly as he swirled the dark liquid around in the cup.

*God, he’s so much like I was back then…excited and terrified at the same time…seems to be a bit braver though. That’s a good thing.* He thought about the first time he’d held hands with a boy in the tenth grade and how his mom had spent days consoling him after he’d been ridiculed by cruel classmates. Although his people-pleasing upbringing demanded that he fit in, Kris hadn’t been able to deny his sexuality and took to dating guys secretly until college. He set his drink down and leaned forward in the chair a little. “First of all, there’s every good chance that kids will call you names or harass you. That’s the risk you take, Brian, but you have to believe that it’s worth it to be yourself…or to figure yourself out for that matter. And you’re lucky that you live in L.A. because it’s got to be more open then small town Arkansas.” *Would have been awesome if I was this confident back then.* He sighed and shook his head. *Don’t dwell.*

Brian looked like he was hanging on to every word as Kris continued. “And secondly, you and Josh need to protect yourself against getting hurt. Stay out in the open around lots of people. Keep your
eye on where the teachers are and when you leave, go in a group.” He sat back again and put his feet up on the coffee table. “I’m not trying to make you paranoid…you’ll probably be fine, but it never hurts to be aware of your surroundings just in case.”

“I just wish…” Brian began hesitantly, “…well it would make it easier for me if Josh wasn’t as nervous as I am….or if he was older and knew what he was doing.” He peered at Kris intensely and then dropped his gaze and blushed right to the roots of his blonde hair.

**Uh-oh. This is not good…not good at all. Oh chill out man, he’s probably confused…he’s attracted to your experience, that’s all.** Nevertheless, this put Kris in a very awkward position; on the one hand, he wanted to help Brian, but his gut told him that this would trigger all of Adam’s insecurities if he found out. *He should know by now that he has nothing to worry about, and I’m not doing anything wrong. Brian is harmless.*

“Hey guys.”

“Matt!” Kris exclaimed. **Thank god for good timing!** He was so relieved for the distraction of his roommate shuffling in from the hallway that he actually got up from his chair and clapped Matt on the back.

“Uh, hey there,” he replied, chortling a bit at Kris’ overly fond greeting. “I was just checking to see if you wanted to watch the pre-game show that’s about to start… football playoffs,” he said to Brian, whose skin was starting resemble its normal shade rather than a glowing sunset.

“Er, Brian?” Kris saw that the young man was quickly recovering from his embarrassment. **Good. I don’t want him feel ashamed. He’s just sorting things out.**

Brian smiled at Kris and took a drink of his Pepsi. “I don’t think so. I like baseball, but I’m not really into football. Maybe we could go talk in your room though?” he suggested hopefully with a gleam in his eye that was far from innocent.

**Okaayyy, that was definitely a clear message. Well, I give him points for bravery, but damn…what the hell am I supposed to do here? I don’t want to hurt his feelings, but there’s no way we can be alone together now.** Part of Kris wanted to believe that he was jumping to conclusions, that the flirty look had just been a trick of the light. **Don’t be an idiot.** Frustration began to pump through his veins as he stood there being stared at by the other two men who were waiting for his reply. It was ridiculous, and the only reason he wasn’t laughing it all off was because of his worry about Adam’s feelings. **Shit. “I know, why don’t we go out. There’s this awesome café Adam took me to that has really good coffee and it’s only a short drive away. How about that?”** Kris hoped that by mentioning his boyfriend’s name it would jog Brian’s brain a bit. **Maybe he forgot for a moment that Adam is his freaking cousin!**

“Yeah, okay, sounds good,” he answered in a less than thrilled tone.

**Please let that have worked. We’ll just pretend that it never happened.** Before they left, Kris walked by the low bookshelf in the living room and trailed a finger over the framed Christmas photo of him and Adam gazing at each other with hearts in their eyes, just for added emphasis.

He tried to keep the conversation light as they drove in Kris’ car to the coffee shop, chatting about baseball and Brian’s plans for college. When they arrived, Kris opted for a table near the window rather than a booth, thinking that it would be even more public. Since it was going on noon they ordered sandwiches and picked up their conversation where they’d left it off earlier.
“So listen, it’s all right if you’re both nervous,” said Kris, trying to ignore the awkwardness still lingering like a thin fog between them. “I mean if you want, you could take him out to a movie first just to see how it feels to be in public before showing up at the dance.”

“You know, that’s actually a good idea.” The subtle frown that Brian had been wearing since they left the apartment lifted a little as he considered the idea. “Yeah, I think I’ll do that. Thanks,” he said, his mouth stretching into a genuine smile that immediately put Kris more at ease.

Phew. Okay, this is better…he just forgot himself back there.

After that, things were much smoother and Kris began to share some stories about when he had come out, mostly as a way to show Brian how courageous he was being in comparison. As he got into it, he began to use his hands animatedly while speaking and found that it felt good to be mentoring someone like this; he couldn’t help but revel in his burgeoning confidence as he watched Brian rest his chin in his hands and listen intently. Kris didn’t even notice when the hazel eyes started to shift from interested to lustful, and he completely missed the way that Brian’s innocent grin was becoming more of smirk.

But someone else noticed.

A loud bang made both of them jump in their seats and whip their heads around to the source of the noise. Framed in the small window was a beautiful face adorned with stormy blue eyes that were full of rage and pain. Those piercing orbs shot poison arrows at Brian that screamed ‘traitor,’ causing the young man to gasp and wince as if he were looking straight into a violent, angry sun.

And then, as if everything were suddenly in slow motion, the furious eyes transformed into ones of grief, moving inch by inch as the man's fist slid down the glass until they were finally staring at Kris. Oh god…oh my baby. Time stood still in that moment; the hurt pouring from his beloved’s features was absolutely excruciating to the heart that was made just for him. But I haven’t done anything wrong!

All at once the world started spinning again and Adam took off at a run.

“Shit! Brian, I have to go…now. You can take a cab back to my apartment and get your car, right?” Kris leapt up from his chair, threw some money down on the table and grabbed his jacket. Don’t panic. We can sort this out.

“Yeah, I can. Listen…god, I’m so sorry if I --”

“I don’t have time,” he said a little gruffly. “I’ll see you later, okay?” Kris swiftly walked out the door and then bolted down the street. Adam was way ahead of him, those long legs carrying him further and faster than Kris could ever manage. Shit shit shit. By the time he was a block away, Adam had already disappeared into his building.

He ran flat out, dodging people and leaping a knocked over trashCan in his haste to get to Adam, worry and fear coating his insides like tar. Why is he so upset? Nothing happened! But the look on his boyfriend’s face and the way he had run like that made Kris scared that he wasn’t thinking clearly. When he reached the building, he raced up the stairs despite the painful stitch in his side and quickly knocked on Adam’s door. He stood there panting, clutching his ribs and waiting, but there was no reply.
“Adam!” He rapped his knuckles again. “Let me in, baby! Come on now…don’t do this!” A deafening crash came from inside and a thrill of horror gripped Kris’ heart. Oh my god! What’s going on in there?! “Adam please!” he yelled desperately, “let me in so we can talk about this! Are you okay? Baby, are you hurt?” He continued to bang on the door and call out to his love in vain. Adam did not answer. Tears of frustration and anxiety began to roll down his face as he hammered his fist relentlessly, but soon his attempts grew increasingly feeble until he finally dropped his arm. He rested his forehead on the stupid barrier, a few inches of wood blocking him from his man. “Please,” he sobbed, “let me in.”

Click.

Chapter 40

Calm the fuck down…just fucking calm down! Adam’s body was shaking with emotion as he paced and viciously kicked out at the air every time he recalled Brian’s eyes full of desire directed at Kris. Breathe goddamnit! Pull yourself together! You trust Kris…he would never…he wouldn’t, you know this…you fucking know this so just stop freaking out for fuck’s sake! Deep down he was sure that Brian wasn’t a real threat to his relationship with Kris, but that didn’t stop his triggers from going off like a hundred cannons and blowing up all over the place.

It was hard to tell up from down with all the feelings vying for his attention, but he knew for certain that he was pissed. It’s fine. I can be mad…I can fucking handle this! He wished to god that he had a punching bag nearby because every muscle in his body was screaming at him to hit something.

Knock, knock, knock. It’s Kris. Go let him in! Wait, fuck…is this the time when I accept help or do it on my own? Shit. I don’t know! The indecision only made him angrier and he stood there seething and paralyzed, listening to Kris yelling and pounding on the door until he couldn’t take it anymore and lunged at the heavy bookcase on the wall, so tall that it nearly reached the ceiling. He only meant to bump the side of it, but he underestimated how much the adrenaline would add to his strength and it wobbled dangerously. And then, as if his feet were stuck in cement, Adam watched as the entire thing began to fall, books flying out everywhere and spilling onto the ground until finally the bookcase landed with an almighty crash onto the coffee table.

Holy fuck! Adam stared, frozen in place and stunned into numbness as he took in the wreckage before him. Not even the loud banging on the door and Kris’ pleading calls could make his feet move. Seconds slipped by and his shock kept him rooted to the floor. The intense feelings and warring thoughts were gone for a moment, and it was almost peaceful…nice, but then a desperate, pitiful sound floated across the room, wiggled into his ear and shot straight up to his brain.

“Please…let me in.”

Kris’ broken voice was a solvent that dissolved the glue on the bottom of Adam’s boots, and he stumbled over to the door as his inner world came to life again. Emotions and words began to rush at him, but he slogged through them enough to make it to where his angel was crying.

Click. He turned the lock, pulled open the door and Kris tumbled into the apartment but quickly righted himself. “Adam!” he cried. “You’re okay! I heard a crash…jesus!” he exclaimed when he saw Adam’s living room, but then he gripped him by the shoulders and shook him a little. “Why
didn’t you let me in?! Don’t you ever do that to me ever again!” he said loudly, furiously wiping at his eyes. He glared at Adam a second longer and then wrapped his arms around him in a bone-crushing hug.

“I…I…Kris…” Adam was having a hard time putting words together, unable to figure out how he was feeling as Kris squeezed him to death. One emotion after another presented itself in rapid succession; all he had to do was choose. Focus on one thing at a time, just like a recipe…. what’s the main ingredient? Kris. He loves you and you love him. “I love you, angel,” he said in a wavering voice.

“I love you too, you silly man!” Kris said with a half sob, half sigh of exasperation. He pulled away, cupped Adam’s face and gazed at him with large, round eyes full of worry and concern. “Baby, what the hell happened?”

Brian’s lustful expression popped into Adam’s head again and he immediately tensed up, clenching his jaw and fists at his sides. “Didn’t you see the way he was looking at you?” he asked gruffly. You’re being irrational, Lambert. Shut up! Sheila said I’m supposed to express myself and Kris…he won’t leave me just because I freaked out…right? I mean, this isn’t as bad as the beach was and he’s still here after everything that’s happened.

Kris frowned and dropped his hands from Adam’s cheeks. “Let’s go sit down, but um…maybe in the kitchen,” he said quietly, surveying the clutter of books on the couch.

As they walked around the fallen bookcase and into the kitchen, Adam wrestled with the maelstrom of feelings swarming him and tried to pick them apart. I’m not mad at Kris, I’m…annoyed. How could he be so naïve? No, I’m mad at Brian. Any normal person knows that you don’t flirt with your cousin’s boyfriend! What the fuck was he thinking! Adam’s old pals shame and fear were also along for the ride and had brought along a nice helping of anger at himself for flipping out. On top of that, his heart was still stinging from those brief moments at the coffee shop where he’d been scared of losing Kris, first because of Brian and second because he’d behaved like a damaged freak again. Finally, there was that deep undercurrent of sadness waving at him from behind the scenes.

Somewhere in the chaotic jumble he could hear a voice telling him that it would be all right, to just take things one step at a time, and he tried to listen that one.

When they’d settled at the table, the two men faced each other rather formally as if they could both tell that there was potential for things to get messy.

“Why are you so upset about this?” Kris finally asked after a minute of strained silence.

“Are you fucking kidding me? Didn’t you see the way he looked at you?”

“Actually no, I didn’t.”

“How on earth could you miss it? He was leering at you like a piece of hot ass!”

“Well I’m sorry, I was kind of feeling good at the time, you know. I thought I was helping him… I thought I was making a difference,” Kris said sadly. “But I don’t think he really knows what he’s doing, Adam. I mean when he came on to me in my apartment, I thought--”

“What! He did? What did he say? Did he try to make a move on you? God that kid, I’m going to fucking throttle him!” he growled as he choked an imaginary neck with his hands.
“He didn’t touch me… calm down and let me finish.”

“No Kris, I can’t believe this! He hit on you and you still took him out to coffee? What the hell!” he yelled. Why would he do that? I would have kicked Brian to the curb so fast…

Kris winced at Adam’s harsh tone and looked down at his hands as if he’d been punished like a bad boy who’d broken a vase. Adam almost took it all back, hating to be the cause of his lover’s hurt face, but he was too angry. For a moment it seemed that Kris wasn’t going to say anything, but then he took a deep breath and raised his eyes steadily until they met Adam’s. “I wanted to help him and I took him to the café because I didn’t want to be alone with him after that. But he didn’t mean anything serious by it… he’s just confused and—"

“I don’t care how confused he is, the little fucker crossed a line! It’s not like some random guy winked at you! He’s my cousin for god’s sake and he knows we’re together! How can you defend him like this? I mean —”

“Would you just listen to me for a second!” Kris shouted.

Whoa. In all the months they’d been together, not once had Kris raised his voice in anger at Adam. His mouth fell open and he stared at the man who was breathing heavily with a determined look in his eyes. Adam was torn between fear that he’d pushed Kris too far and being impressed that his boyfriend was standing up for himself. Plus, you’ve got to admit that it’s kind of hot. “Yes, go ahead… I’ll listen,” he said, trying to push down the incessant prattling of his emotions.

“Thank you!” Kris said, seeming a bit surprised at his own daring. He blushed and modified his tone to be softer. “I think that Brian is attracted to me, yes, but also I think there’s a little bit of hero worshipping going on for him,” Kris explained. “He’s quite confused still… I know, it’s not an excuse for his behavior,” he said when Adam’s mouth visibly tightened, “but I remember when I was scared like he is… and I just wanted to give him some of the confidence that I never had at his age.”

Adam looked at Kris’ miserable expression and felt the fury simmer down. “You’re too nice,” he said with a sigh, “Brian deserves a kick in the ass.”

Kris met his gaze and reached across the table to join their hands. “Adam, did you really think that you had anything to worry about? Don’t you trust me?”

“Oh course I trust you, angel, I just….” Now it was Adam’s turn to be sad. “When I saw him smirking at you like that, I just reacted. I wasn’t thinking and… I’m sorry.” Idiot, you need to learn to think before you leap. Hey, stop that. He thought about Sheila’s advice and fumbled for memories until he recalled the time that he’d blown up his mom’s birthday cake in the oven when he was twelve. I’m doing the best I can.

“It’s okay, really… but why didn’t you let me in? You scared the crap out of me, baby. I thought you were hurt, or….” Kris shook his head, the tracks of drying tears on his face shimmering in the light as he squeezed Adam’s hand tightly.

“I got stuck,” he stated simply, “I didn’t know if I was supposed to handle it on my own or let you help me… and I got stuck and that made me even more mad. I didn’t mean to bring the whole bookcase down though, that was an accident.” He frowned and willed himself not to fall into a cycle of self-criticism, but it was damn hard.
“Lover…I promise you that I won’t interfere if you’re trying to work things out by yourself, but you have to promise not to shut me out like that. At least talk to me through the door so I know you’re okay next time.” He brought Adam’s hand to his lips and kissed it like a precious treasure.

Adam nodded. “I promise, but I don’t want there to be a next time…I mean I’ll probably have my freaks outs, but I don’t want to see Brian look at you like that ever again. Please tell me that you’re not going to keep hanging out with him.” Adam knew that it would be an enormous challenge for him if Kris continued trying to help his cousin. You can’t control what he does…you’ll just have to deal if he decides to.

“Honestly, I don’t know what to do. I didn’t expect him to do that…maybe he needs a new mentor. I’ll have to think about it.”

A silence fell over them as they gazed into each other’s eyes, crystal blue waters and dark brown pools of concern and love washing back and forth between them. Suddenly, Kris brushed his lips across Adam’s palm and poked his tongue out to lick up one finger. “But right now I want us to kiss and make up. And you should feel lucky that you have a boyfriend who’s hot enough to get hit on by a teenager,” he said as his eyes began to heat up.

“Damn, baby,” Adam said with a shiver, “you sure know how to change the subject.” He’s so fucking sexy like this. It was fair to say that Kris’ assertiveness was becoming a major turn on for Adam. They stood up at the same time and met in the middle of the kitchen. “You are hot,” he said to Kris as they wrapped their arms around each other, “and you’re even sexier when you’re mad,” he whispered and bent his head to capture his lover’s parted lips.

The kiss was hot and heavy, a release for all of the worry and anger they had both experienced over the last hour. Adam filled his hands with Kris’ tight ass and pulled their bodies together as their tongues tangled and licked.

“Bedroom,” Kris panted after having his bottom lip bitten several times by Adam’s devilishly cutting teeth.

“Hell yeah,” he returned huskily and started walking them out of the kitchen still plastered to each other, smooth skin and firm muscles the only things on his mind.

“Shit!”

“Oh fuck! Angel, are you okay?” Adam asked, crawling over to where Kris was splayed on the ground amidst a pile of books.

“I’m fine,” he chortled, “but I’ve got something up my ass that shouldn’t be.” He pulled out a black and green paperback from under his butt and looked at the title. “Wicked?”

“It’s a great story and makes for an awesome musical, but…” Adam said, dropping his voice while he moved to lay on top of Kris, “…I know something much more wicked that should be up your ass right now.” He thumbed those cherry red lips, all swollen from kissing and being bitten. So pretty. No wonder Brian couldn’t behave himself.

Kris started to laugh again, but his chuckles were quickly silenced by a skilled tongue seeking entrance to his mouth. He wound his hands into Adam’s hair and responded eagerly. Neither seemed
to care that they were making out in the middle of a mess, poetry and literature a witness to their
writhing bodies, fervent kisses and exploring hands.

“Oh god, baby, I could take you right here…I swear you’ve got to be the sexiest man alive,” Adam
groaned as he started to suck and nibble on Kris’ neck exactly where he knew it would drive him
crazy.

Kris gasped and arched his neck the best he could from the floor, pushing it further into Adam’s
teasing teeth. “Do it, fuck me right here…yesss,” he moaned, wrapping his legs around Adam and
rummaging for a condom in those back pockets that were always well stocked. When his hands
came up empty, however, he whined and began to thrust into Adam anyway.

“Damn it! I’m getting too lazy,” Adam panted, knees digging into carpet as he dry humped his lover,
desperate for the friction to his aching dick. There was no stopping or turning back now as they
urgently frotted their groins together, rubbing and swiveling hard cocks, making scratchy sounds of
fly on fly. Adam dropped to Kris’ chest and gave him a dirty, sloppy kiss, moaning and puffing hot
air into his mouth.

“Faster…please!” Kris begged against freckled lips. “I’m so…oh god…”

A bead of sweat trickled down Adam’s temple as he sped up, feeling his balls begin to clench and he
sank his teeth into his lover’s shoulder knowing it would send him over the edge.

Kris snapped his head back and cried out his release with a whole body shudder as Adam continued
to bite the muscle, thrusting wildly until that glorious pleasure erupted and made his toes curl in his
boots. He shouted into Kris’ flesh and then collapsed, amazed that even clothed they could have such
incredible sex.

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“And she uses oil to clean herself, right, because she can’t get wet,” Adam explained to Kris ten
minutes later as they lay on the floor, too tired to move yet.

“Oil? That’s so weird.”

“Yeah, but it’s a really good story,” he said, shifting a little so that he could get his arms all the way
around Kris. “It’s funny and interesting…you should read it someday.”

Kris yawned and put ‘Wicked’ on a pile of other books. “Adam?”

“Hmm?”

“How much do you love me?”

“A hell of a lot, angel.” Adam kissed the back of his neck and made him giggle. “Way more than I
can express with words.” So much that it hurts when I’m not with you.

Kris sighed contentedly. “Me, too.”
“Yeah? Do you love me enough to help me clean this all up?”

“Of course. I guess that means we have to get up, huh?”

Before getting started on the living room, they took some time to wash up and changed into something more comfortable for moving heavy furniture. Since Kris had not planned on being at Adam’s that day, he borrowed a pair of sweat pants and had to roll them up at the bottom a few times. Adam thought he looked adorable and told him so.

“Adorable? What happened to sexy and hot?” Kris pouted.

Adam snorted and pinched him on the ass. “You’re all those things, but right now you’re cute…I love seeing you in my clothes.” When oh when can we live together? Please let it be soon. He’d been trying so hard to be patient about this, but it was difficult when all he wanted was Kris twenty-four seven. But that’s the whole problem, isn’t it? You’ve got to be less dependent on him…get involved in more things and spend time with other people. “You know, I’ve been thinking that it’s about time for me to meet Matt,” he said as he began picking up books from the couch and stacking them on the floor.

“Really?” Kris looked at him with excitement clear on his features.

Adam did a quick check to make sure he was being honest with himself and found that he was. I’m ready…nervous, but ready. “Yeah, really,” he said with a genuine smile that reached his eyes.

“That’s so awesome!” Kris beamed so enthusiastically that Adam laughed and lifted him off the floor high enough that he had to look up to see his face.

“You’re just like a cute puppy,” Adam chuckled and rubbed his nose into Kris’ chest.

“I am not! Put me down you big oaf!” he giggled, kicking his legs in the air a little.

“Nope! You’re my prisoner now.” He hoisted his boyfriend even higher, slung him over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes and started walking down the hallway to the bedroom.

“Let me go…let me go!” Kris laughed and spanked Adam on the ass, his face turning beet red from hanging upside down.

Adam felt so giddy just then that he couldn’t believe how angry he’d been just a little while ago. That was a stupid thing to get mad at. Brian isn’t a threat…no one is. Angel loves me. “Nothing doing, lover! I’m not letting you down until we get to the bed!”

Kris stopped fighting at once.

Chapter 41

Kris waited with baited breath as he watched Matt take the first bite of salmon. “Well?”

Matt began to chew so slowly that Kris knew he was doing it deliberately just be a pain in the ass.
“Oh come on! How is it?”

“Hmm. Well, it’s not five star restaurant quality, but…”

“Like you’ve ever been in a place that fancy. Stop being a dick and tell me what you think.”

Matt chuckled and took a sip of beer. “It’s actually pretty good, man. I’m impressed.”

“Really? What about the rice, try that, too,” Kris said eagerly, waving an oven mitt at his roommate. To his surprise, making rice had turned out to be even harder than the fish; it seemed almost impossible to get it just right and he was close to giving up and going with the Uncle Ben’s ninety second microwave variety.

“It’s…humm, a bit chewy to be honest,” said Matt after a few forkfuls, “but it’s not bad. I’d still eat it.”

“Ugh. That’s not good enough.” He wanted it to be perfect and ‘not bad’ just didn’t cut it. Maybe I’m overcooking it or undercooking, I don’t even know…guess I’ll have to call mom again. Kris’ mother had been absolutely tickled when he’d asked her for assistance last week, saying how much she adored Adam and was all too happy to help her ‘little boy’ make a special meal for him.

“Dude, you’re really going all out for this guy,” said Matt with a genuine smile, “I can’t wait to hang out with him.”

Kris had told him the good news about Adam’s decision and they were planning to get together sometime in the next few weeks. Matt was especially excited because after several discussions on the phone about what to do, Kris had suggested to Adam that Alisan be invited along to make him feel more comfortable. Two people he knew and trusted instead of just one would hopefully be easier to handle. Matt was obviously all for the idea, saying that a hot girl always makes the party more fun.

“He’s got an awesome sense of humor,” said Kris, “you’ll love him and Alisan, too. But you have to be a gentleman otherwise I’ll kick your ass like you know I can,” he said as he started to clean up the kitchen.

“Yeah right, I’d like to see you try it,” Matt scoffed and brandished his fork like a sword.

Kris tossed the new cooking utensils he’d purchased into the sink and smirked at him. “Don’t tempt me,” he chuckled, knowing that he probably could make good on his playful threat given all the time he’d spent working out at the gym with Adam.

They bantered back and forth while he did the dishes and Matt finished the rare treat of a home cooked meal. When Matt finally left the kitchen, Kris continued to scrub the rice pot, amazed at how many little bits of starch could cling to something that was supposed to be non-stick. He found it kind of relaxing to have his hands in the warm, soapy water and started thinking about the eventual meeting of his best friend and his lover. Adam was still undecided on whether or not he wanted Kris to tell Matt anything about him before they met. It’s got to be a tough choice. He wants so much to be ‘normal,’ but Matt should probably be prepared for how guarded he’ll be at first. God I miss him.

They hadn’t been together since that craziness on Sunday because Kris had asked to work a double shift on Tuesday to help compensate for Adam’s birthday expenses. It still amazed him to think about
how he’d yelled at Adam that day. *It felt good, scary, but good.* He was proud of himself for taking a stand and understood that he needed to continue developing his ability to handle conflict if he wanted a successful long term relationship with Adam. Kris hadn’t come to a firm conclusion about Brian yet either. The young man had called on Monday apologizing profusely for his behavior and asked Kris if he would continue to mentor him. Kris had told him no for the time being, but that he wasn’t ruling it out for the future. He had also recommended that Brian call Adam to apologize. *Wasn’t too keen on that now, was he?* Kris chuckled to himself, thinking that he wouldn’t want to be in Brian’s shoes if he made that call.

*My boyfriend could kick anyone’s ass. Mmm...* Scenes of Adam at the gym started to play in his mind…rippling muscles…sweaty skin… Kris sighed longingly, hating himself right now for agreeing to a schedule where he didn’t see his love on Thursday evenings. *Phone calls aren’t enough. I miss those beautiful eyes, the way he looks at me after sex…* He pouted at the sink and started to sing the new song he’d written for Adam. It wasn’t exactly a romantic ballad, more of a message about hanging in there through the tough times. *I hope he likes it.*

“Hey, Kris!” Matt yelled from the living room.

“What?”

“Your phone is making noise and interrupting my show.”

Kris peered at the clock on the wall and saw that it was a good two hours before Adam normally called him. He quickly dried his hands on a blue-checkered towel, wondering who it could be as he went to grab his dinging phone. *A text message...from Adam!* Grinning like a fool, he opened the message and thought how awesome it was that his pulse still quickened at seeing his boyfriend’s name even after all these months together. “Come over here,” Kris read aloud as he walked back to his bedroom. *Oh my god, is something wrong? But he would have called me if there was.* He immediately texted back: “are u ok?” Heart racing, he sat on his bed and waited for the reply, which came a few seconds later: “all is well. come here. bring ur bag.” *Phew. I’ve got to stop jumping to conclusions like that. Wonder what’s up.*

Kris didn’t usually spend the night at Adam’s on Thursdays, but he wasn’t complaining and was all too eager to finish up in the kitchen and pack his small weekend bag so he could get going. He fired off a quick reply to say he’d be there soon. “Matt, I’ll see you on Sunday,” he said after he was ready, “I’m heading over to Adam’s early this week.”

“Hey try to be back for the playoff game, will you? It’s the Jets and the Colts...should be pretty good.”

“For sure, man.”

Fortunately, the parking situation was a fraction less annoying and Kris found a spot only half a block away. He couldn’t wait to see his lover after what felt like ages of being apart, and he walked with a spring in his step whistling and smiling at passers by. After trotting up the stairs, he rapped on the door and waited. A moment later it opened, but only a crack. *That’s weird. “Adam?”* he called softly, peeking his nose in through the gap. No reply. Feeling a bit apprehensive, Kris pushed open the door and it met no resistance. The inside of the apartment was pitch dark and Adam was nowhere in sight. *Okay...I’m officially creeped out.*

He took one step across the threshold and suddenly a muscular arm grabbed him around the waist and pulled him inside. Kris dropped his bag and yelped in surprise as a firm body crushed him into
the wall next to the door; adrenaline shot throughout his veins and his first instinct was to fight, but he was no match for those arms that were made to manhandle me. Although he couldn’t see a thing, he’d know that scent anywhere. “Adam.”

“Shhhh, no talking,” came a silky smooth voice from the dark. Kris heard the sound of the door closing and shuddered from head to toe, panting from the rush of momentary fear combined with excitement and intense arousal. He could already feel wetness seeping into the front of his briefs. He smells like sex somehow… and he’s shirtless! Adam spread his legs on either side of Kris and his pants made soft creaks that sounded like leather. Leather? Oh fuck. He reached out blindly, wanting to touch, but his searching fingers only graced a taut thigh before his hands were snatched up and pinned above his head.

“Rabbit,” Adam purred, his warm, minty breath curling into Kris’ nostrils and mouth, driving him mad with want. “I just had the most interesting dinner date with Ali.” He rolled his hips once and Kris gasped as their lengths connected. Ali? Wait… what? It was near impossible to think clearly with a sensuous, raging hot man plastered against him. “Mmmm…she said that she wanted to take me out to coffee on my birthday.” Oh shit…I hope she didn’t tell… But the wires in his brain shorted out just then because a pair of teeth were cutting into his neck and the fact that he couldn’t see made it ten times more erotic.

He moaned loudly and tried to buck his hips, but Adam pressed him almost painfully into the wall. Every point where his body touched the seductive creature seemed to be on fire, from his wrists encircled by one large hand all the way down to his legs imprisoned in a leathery jail. “She also asked me the strangest question,” Adam said after licking up Kris’ jaw and making him shiver uncontrollably. “She wanted to know if I’d be comfortable having you be in my apartment without me here.” Oh damn, he suspects…he… ohhhhh… He groaned as Adam slipped one hand between their bodies and moved it in circles, rubbing both of their straining bulges at the same time over and over until Kris was achingly hard and almost weeping at the utter sexiness of this kinky game.

“You’re being a sneaky little rabbit, aren’t you?” Adam breathed just millimeters from Kris’ lips. Freckles… want them. Chest heaving with desire, he stuck his tongue out in hopes of catching those soft lips that were hissing so sinfully tonight. Yessss… He got one luscious taste and then cried out when Adam bit his tongue and held it firmly. Oh god oh god oh god… Seconds ticked by and Kris started to drool through puffing, open-mouthed breaths punctuated with little whimpers from the back of his throat. He tried to swallow but Adam would not let go and saliva slithered down his chin while his cock pulsed painfully with need. No thoughts computed in his brain except want… fuck… more… want…

All at once the wicked man released Kris’ tongue, yanked his right up leg from the floor with one hand and wrapped it around slim leather hips. “Naughty rabbit,” he growled and began rolling, circling, snapping and gyrating his hips so relentlessly into Kris that he was positive he was going to come in about one second.

“Yesss… faster…” he begged, unable to keep quiet as he was brought to the very brink of pleasure. But with those words everything stopped; his arms were freed and his leg fell to the floor as Adam moved away completely, leaving a quivering mess of a man teetering on the edge and gasping for air. “Fuck… fuck!” Where is he? Where… He heard heavy breathing nearby and could smell his lover everywhere, on his skin, in the air… he even detected a faint hint of Adam’s toothpaste.

“Turn around.”
Kris didn’t hesitate to do as he was told; he was a puppet with every string attached to Adam’s voice and wrapped around his fingers. He faced the wall, desperately wanting to touch himself but knowing instinctually that he wouldn’t be permitted. Sensing a presence behind him, he stood as still as his trembling body would allow, waiting… waiting… until finally he felt a soft cloth settle over his eyes. Oh jesus… He silently thanked the gods of kink as Adam tied the blindfold tightly at the back of his head.

Long fingers gripped his shoulders and turned him back around before leaving him once more. He heard soft footsteps like those of bare feet and the click of a lamp somewhere to his left. I’m going to have the worst case of blueballs ever. When Adam returned, he cupped Kris’ face and lapped at the drying spit on his chin until it was newly wet. Every other sense was heightened with the loss of vision and the flickering tongue sent chills down his spine. A moment later Kris felt Adam’s breath at his ear.

“Angel,” he whispered and nipped at Kris’ earlobe in a brief moment of affection.

An unexpected tear formed at the corner of his eye, whether from love or sensory overload he couldn’t tell. Kris blinked and the dark fabric absorbed the drop at once.

“Come,” said Adam in a commanding voice again. He grasped Kris’ hand and began to guide him forward. “Naughty rabbits get punished.”

* 

Naked, blindfolded and splayed out on his stomach, Kris tried not to writhe into the mattress too much, but it was taking all his willpower not to as he imagined what lay in store for him now. He could tell that there was light coming from somewhere in the room and it seemed to be a soft, warm glow. Smoke…vanilla?…a candle. Adam was fiddling with something near the dresser and Kris thought he heard a cap unscrewing. Like a violin tuned for playing with every string anticipating the draw of the bow, he quivered in his hyper aroused state until he felt the mattress dip a few inches.

“Because your naughtiness is being done out of love,” Adam said as he trailed a finger down the back of Kris’ naked thigh, “your punishment will be sweet.”

Kris swallowed dryly and tried not to come on the bed sheets. Want. A few more seconds of torturous waiting passed and then something warm dripped onto his back. He sniffed the air for clues as Adam poured a tacky substance in a line across his skin. A light flowery scent…Honey…oh motherfucking fuck! Food play was not something that Kris had much experience with, but he was wide open to sexual exploration and the idea of Adam licking his sticky body made those violin strings stretch tight enough to snap.

“Wicked, sexy, sneaky,” Adam murmured right at the back of Kris’ neck, causing all the little hairs there to stand up in excitement.

Little bursts of air escaped Kris’ lips as Adam’s mouth hovered an inch from the line of honey. The agony in his dick only added to the overall sensory experience and when he felt that glorious tongue touch his skin, he gripped a pillow and dug his toes into the bedding to keep himself from thrusting his hips like an horny animal.

Adam licked the amber trail from Kris’ shoulder blade down to the small of his back with one long swipe and then retraced the path, flickering his tongue until the skin was clean. Kris puffed out a breath he didn’t know he was holding, but he would have no respite. Line after line decorated his
body with occasional swirls and Adam showed no mercy as he tortured his willing victim, licking the backs of his knees and the side of his ribcage, making honey pools and lapping them up as if he were a thirsty tiger.

Once the last puddle was gone, Adam drew a zigzag across the swell of Kris’ ass and dragged his tongue all over it. Panting heavily, Kris sucked in a huge breath of air when he felt heat and wetness teasing and pushing right between his...Oh my god...he’s going to... He had to bite his knuckles to stifle a shout when Adam spread his cheeks and drizzled the warm liquid right across his puckered hole. But there was no way in hell he could silence his moans as that sinful tongue dipped into his honeyed entrance like a hummingbird to a flower, sipping, fluttering, and licking until the only sounds Kris could make were tiny, mewling cries.

Fingertips suddenly let him go and pressed into his hips instead to lift them until he was on his knees with his face still hot against the mattress. His torso went up again and this time when it came back down, his knees landed in between Adam’s legs. The smell of leather was strong in the air now and Kris wanted so bad to see his lover wearing nothing but those sexy pants. He knew that Adam was barefoot for sure because his dick made contact with crossed feet and he yelped loudly. Sensory overload is a fucking understatement!

When he was pried apart again, Kris felt every little hair pull with the honey and it was deliciously painful but short lived; Adam trickled even more of the sweet stuff onto his sticky hole and started licking like he was trying to catch melting ice cream from a cone.

“Adam...Adam...Adam...” Kris chanted with every swipe of that heavenly tongue, beside himself with pleasure, white knuckling the pillow above his head and gasping each time Adam moved a foot to tease his engorged, leaking cock. “Please...please...” he began to beg when he couldn’t take it anymore. Kris thought for a moment that his pleading fell on deaf ears, but then his length was squeezed...between his feet!...and pulled once, twice...three times...

“Oh...ohhhhh god! Yes!” he cried out at last as he made a mess of Adam’s bed, writhing and squirming against that tongue that wouldn’t quit even as his cum was pumping profusely into the sheets. “Shit...shit...SHIT!” Adam bit the sensitive skin right next to Kris’ entrance and that was it. Any muscle that had been trying to function threw in the towel and went completely limp.

Adam finally drew back and gently helped Kris onto his side away from the pool of cum, careful to avoid touching his spent member. He cuddled up behind him and untied the blindfold. “Good rabbit,” he murmured and pressed a honey kiss to the soft skin just below Kris’ ear.

**

An hour later the men were showered, the sheets were changed and Kris lay on his back, reveling in the light caresses that Adam was tracing across his bare chest. After the adventure that made him come his brains out, Kris had tried to give his boyfriend the best blow job he could manage in the shower. “You’re amazing,” he said, gazing into blue orbs clearly full of adoration.

“Hmmm.” Propped up onto his elbow, Adam just smiled down at Kris and continued to draw lazy circles with his fingertips. “The internet is full of genius ideas,” he said quietly after a few moments.

“You’re still amazing,” said Kris, “that was insanely hot.”
Adam tilted his head as though considering something. “Thank you.”

*He’s getting better at taking compliments…nice.*

“So, are you going to tell me what you’re planning?” Adam asked as he shifted his attention to Kris’ face and began stroking his forehead, cheeks and jaw with extreme tenderness.

“And ruin the surprise? No way,” he chuckled softly, closing his eyes and just enjoying the peaceful moment they were sharing. “By the way, what did you tell Ali?”

“That of course you can be here without me. I would think it’d be a given seeing how badly I want us to live together.”

“I’d never assume that.”

“I know, angel. I love that about you.”

Kris smelled a hint of honey and opened his eyes to find Adam’s face an inch from his own. Staring into the azure depths, he felt so cared for, so loved that he was sure he must be dreaming. After all the heartbreaks Kris had suffered, the fact that this beautiful, amazing man wanted him was almost surreal. He combed his fingers through Adam’s damp hair and drew him in for a sugary kiss.

Soft presses of lips and little flickers of tongues satisfied them for several minutes. Adam continued to sweep his fingertips over Kris’ body, trailing them up his side and down to his outer thigh, making him shiver as their kisses gradually grew more intense. Kris got lost in the taste of flowers, musk and mint on his lover’s tongue and sucked it gently. Adam whispered a moan and draped his body on top of Kris’, cupped his jaw with both hands and made love to his mouth.

*Heaven.*

**

The next morning they woke up with plans to scope out the apartment scene. Adam wanted to find something close to his new job and had already made appointments to view several possibilities. It was a little strange for Kris because he was almost sure that one day in the not too distant future, he would be living in whatever apartment Adam decided on. He kept catching himself evaluating the layouts of different rooms and wondering where his stuff would go. *Don’t get ahead of yourself.* But he couldn’t help it.

“I like this one,” said Adam at their third stop. “Really nice kitchen. What do you think?”

“Your decision,” Kris replied, leaning against the granite counter and trying not to imagine breakfast together every morning in this room.

Adam ignored the landlord for a moment, walked over to Kris and took him by both hands. “You’ll be spending lots of time here, too, and…well, you know…” He didn’t need to finish the sentence; they both knew what he was implying. He gazed at Kris with eyes full of hope and a little worry, too.
It still lingers…the doubt that it will really happen, that I’ll really stay. He grinned and pecked Adam on the cheek. “I love the kitchen…and the bedroom looked nice and spacious,” he said with a wink.

Adam’s brows lifted and he beamed so brightly that his smile would surely put the sun to shame. They looked at several more places before lunch and decided to eat at a deli with outdoor seating since it was such a nice day.

“How are you feeling about tonight?”

“Well, a little nervous,” Adam answered. “You saw at my audition how this club is more intimate, and I’ve chosen some different songs to perform to suit the mood better. It’s not my usual set, but I think it will go down good.” He sipped on his green iced tea and took a deep breath. “No, I’m sure it will go down good,” he said more firmly, talking to himself more than Kris.

Kris thought about Adam’s last job and how he’d been like sex incarnate on the stage, singing upbeat songs to a crowd mostly made up of men who just wanted to be fucked by him. This will be so good for him…to be appreciated for his artistry and raw talent. “I can’t wait,” he said, “I know you’ll be spectacular up there, baby.”

“Damn right. You know what, maybe I’ll invite mom and dad to come see me perform some time.”

“I’m sure they’d love it,” said Kris, “and Neil, too.”

Adam frowned at the mention of that name and Kris remembered that Neil would be leaving for New York soon. He’d already postponed his departure so that he could be at Adam’s birthday dinner but would be moving the week after. Kris understood the closeness of siblings and knew that Adam would miss his brother very much. “Hey, I’m sure he’ll come home to visit,” he said, reaching across the table to grasp Adam’s hand reassuringly.

“Yeah,” he sighed. “It’s times like these that I’d love to be rich and famous so I could jet around wherever I wanted.” Adam glanced around at the streets filled with every day joes, celebrities, struggling artists and college students. “Don’t you?” he asked Kris.

He thought about it for a moment before responding. True, his dream was to become a recording artist, but he never really thought about the fame aspect to it. “Well, I just want to make music,” he smiled, “I don’t really care about the other stuff.”

Adam nodded. He took another bite of food, chewed it thoughtfully and swallowed. “I get that, I mean that’s what I really want, too, but it would be nice to be up a level and to do it on my own… not with my parents’ help.”

For over an hour the two men sat and discussed their hopes and dreams. At first it was just about music and careers, but then things like Kris’ childhood fantasy to one day jump out of an airplane came up and it opened the door to all sorts of crazy ideas and adventures that would be even more fun when shared with a loved one. Kris was so enthralled with Adam’s story about wanting to see what it was like to live on a Native American reservation that he didn’t hear his phone ring the first two times.

“Adam! It’s the clinic!” he said with a mixture of excitement and trepidation when he saw the number. “I bet they have my results…oh my god.”

“Hurry up and answer it!” Adam squeaked animatedly while waving his arms around in the air.
With shaky hands Kris pushed the button and held the phone to his ear. “H-hello? Yes, this is Kris Allen. Yes…okay…uh huh…I understand…yes…I certainly will…thank you very much.” He ended the call and looked at the love of his life. Adam had his fingers pressed to his mouth in anticipation and his eyes were wide.

“Adam…I’m clean.”

Chapter 42

It was Friday, January 29th at 9:00 AM and the sky was overcast outside Adam’s window. A few rays of sunshine were struggling to break through the clouds as Adam lay snug and warm in his bed, sleeping soundly until one of those weak beams managed to sneak through a gap in the blinds and fell across his freckled face. His eyes fluttered open and he squinted into the morning. It’s my birthday, was his first thought, and his second was a piece of paper on his dresser that looked like it had been unfolded and refolded many times.

He got up, grabbed the report and sat on the edge of his bed, staring at it for what seemed like the hundredth time since he’d first opened the envelope. Adam had received his official STD results in the mail yesterday, two days after the clinic had called him. As he looked down at the words, a large tear rolled down his cheek and dripped from his jaw to the page. Another followed and then another in its wake like the beginning of a rain shower, and soon the paper was blotted with wet stains. He set it down, curled up on his side and began crying loudly, unable to stem the ocean of sadness that unexpectedly rolled in and took over his happy tears at testing negative for everything.

He’d promised himself to do the best he could to release the old waves of grief when they began to crash and so there he was, face pressed into his pillow letting it out in steady sobs. He wrapped his arms around his knees and rocked a little, trying to comfort himself as a parent or friend would - self-soothing, Sheila had called it. It certainly wasn’t the best way to start out his birthday, but sorrow knew only its need for expression and had little regard for place and time. For ten more minutes it continued until the giant surfs became trickling streams and Adam was finally able to sit up and blow his nose. Well that was fun. It wasn’t the first time this had happened nor would it be the last, Sheila had assured him earlier that week. He let out a heavy sigh, feeling both exhausted and lighter if that was even possible, and got up to use the bathroom.

A few minutes later as he scrambled two eggs in his favorite skillet, he tried to figure out the connection between the good news of his test results and the sadness, but by the time he was adding tomatoes, mushrooms and spinach to the pan he was nowhere nearer to understanding it. Maybe it just happens randomly. When he was finished cooking, Adam sat down at the kitchen table and couldn’t help the longing that suddenly swept over him, wishing that Kris were here to enjoy this meal with him. He stared at the empty seat opposite him and pouted a little.

Normally on Fridays Kris came over at around noon, but today Adam was supposed to have lunch with his Nana and he’d have to wait until this evening to see his love. Tonight…we’re going to…oh my god… Thinking about the new level of closeness they were about to share made Adam so happy that he giggled and almost choked on his eggs. After the clinic called on Tuesday, it had taken every ounce of Adam’s willpower not to drive to Macy’s and throw Kris up against one of the fitting room walls, but he was glad that they’d decided to wait
to do it. Despite how the day had begun, he knew that this would be one birthday he’d never forget.
I bet he’s going to order a special meal and wants to set it all up…maybe that’s why I have to go out
with Ali for coffee.

As he thought of all the wonderful things in store for him, Adam found it a little easier to enjoy his
breakfast alone. He even took his medication with a bit less grumbling than usual. The psychiatrist
had put him on Celexa and fortunately so far the only side effects were mild drowsiness and the
occasional headache. Although he hated taking it, he knew that anti-anxiety drugs had helped him in
the past and would probably be beneficial once the medication was fully in his system.

After breakfast Adam went to the gym for his regular workout and discovered that the combination
of crying this morning and knocking the shit out of the punching bag was doing wonders for his
mood. He boxed and kicked the tough leather until sweat was plastering his tank top to his chest and
back, and by eleven o’clock he felt ready handle the day.

The sun finally won out over the clouds and beamed brightly into the Los Angeles sky, matching the
shiny feelings in Adam’s heart as he drove through town on his way to meet Nana for his annual
birthday lunch. Every year they went to Yai Restaurant because it had the best Thai food Adam had
ever tasted. Not surprisingly, the hot topic of conversation this year was Kris, how handsome he was,
his kind nature and how fun it was to be in love. Adam found it easy to talk to his grandmother since
the two of them had always been very close. He also told her about Kris’ bravery with his family
over Christmas, to which she fiercely replied, “I bet I could kick this Silvia’s ass in a fair fight, but
I’m proud of Kris for standing up for himself.”

Adam chuckled around a mouthful of curry at the mental image of the two old ladies playing
fisticuffs. “I’m sure you could,” he said and winked at her, then let out a huge belly laugh when she
actually put her dukes up and threw a few punches into the air. I have the best grandma ever.

After a

few more minutes of lighthearted conversation, Nana grew serious and asked Adam what he thought
his future with Kris would be like.

“Well, I know that at some point we’re going to live together, hopefully soon,” he said wistfully,
“and after that…” Adam tapped his fork on the plate and glanced at his bracelet surreptitiously. “I
don’t ever want us to be apart.”

Jane stirred her tea, set down her spoon and peered at him with concern. “I hope that happens for
you, my sweet boy because no one deserves that kind of happiness as much as you do, but I would
also love to know that if it doesn’t happen for some reason…that you’d be okay.”

“I wouldn’t be okay,” he said without reservation, “I’d be devastated beyond belief.” It was the
honest truth and the mere thought of that horrible possibility made Adam’s heart constrict painfully in
his chest. “I mean maybe after a really long time I would be able to move on but,” he shook his head
sadly, “it would be extremely difficult.”

“No doubt…no doubt about that at all, but I want you to promise me something, child.” She laid her
wrinkled hand on top of his and patted it gently. “Your grandfather would never have wanted you to
join him before your time. Promise me that no matter how bad things might get in your life that you
will live it,” she said in a rather broken voice.

Adam recalled talking to his deceased grandfather just after Christmas when he’d added the photo of
him and Kris to the box. I said I wouldn’t, but…I couldn’t have him in my life… He felt sick to his
stomach and was just about to tell Nana that he’d do his best, but something strange began to tickle
his consciousness - an odd, seemingly out of place notion that if he was capable of having a
relationship like this then maybe he’d be able to again if he and Kris couldn’t be together forever. That thought was immediately struck down by the rest of his brain that said ‘it’s angel or no one at all.’ Nevertheless, the fact that even a tiny portion of his mind could contemplate any kind of future without Kris was a sign to Adam that he was a little less dependent on him. Wow. That’s...that’s really good! “Nana, I promise,” he said sincerely as he gazed into eyes that were exactly the same shade as his.

He felt so proud of himself when their lunch date was over that he went to visit Fifi to tell her that she shouldn’t get sold because she was supposed to come and live with him and Kris soon. It’s going to happen, it will. Although he knew that he was the one who had to work for it, Adam found himself whispering hopes like prayers to the universe as he cuddled Fifi’s warm body close to his chest and stroked her smooth skin. She licked his hand and looked up at him with mocha eyes that somehow seemed to understand.

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Why won’t this day go faster? No matter what Adam did to distract himself until Kris and Alisan arrived, none if it seemed to make time speed up, not even working on his music. He stuck with it, however, because he wanted to finish the angel song by Valentine’s Day and there were still a few verses that kept tripping him up. At first the song had been about yearning mixed in with fear of abandonment, but now he wanted it to have more hope and love in it. As he sang his heart out to his lover, time continued to mock him and was stubbornly refusing to get a move on despite his occasional glares at the clock. His parents and then Neil called to wish him a happy birthday and he tried to make the conversations last as long as possible.

With two hours to go he hopped into the shower and started getting ready. What should I wear? It was a very special occasion even aside from being his birthday and he wanted to look good. Perfection was impossible because of those niggling things that he didn’t like about his appearance, especially his freckles. But Kris likes them...a lot. Maybe I’ll skip the foundation tonight. He spent ages in his closet going through outfits. At one point he came across a pair of sex pants and wondered if he should get rid of them, but he didn’t. I will though...soon. Finally he decided on some dark blue jeans that hugged him in all the right places and a form-fitting button down shirt that matched his eyes perfectly. He rolled up the sleeves to his elbows and turned this way and that to admire how the thin stripes of silver glinted in the light. Good.

Black eyeliner was a must and he added some lip gloss because he knew Kris loved it like crazy, and with that his makeup was finished. His hair, however, took a long time since he was used to styling it sans face freckles. In the end he rewashed it in the sink and just let it be scruffy and messed up. When he studied himself in the mirror, Adam was reminded of how he’d looked as a young teenager and something about that felt right.

Still twenty minutes? Damn! The apartment was clean, his bed was made with precision and all he could think of to do was sit down and watch the news. He was just starting to get interested in a story about a local clothing designer who had opened up a new store when he heard a knock at the door. “Yeay!” he squealed, not caring that he sounded like a seven-year-old.

He jumped up, turned off the TV and pulled open the door; there stood Alisan and… Oh. My. God. Adam and Kris both gasped loudly and stared open-mouthed at one another. Kris looked like a sculpted god in tight yet supple leather pants that showed off his delicious candy, a black t-shirt that
must have been painted on...I can see his nipples!...and no way...eyeliner. Fuck me! Completely ignoring Alisan, the two men suddenly collided and started sucking face.

“Awww, how sweet,” said Alisan, but when they didn’t stop trying to inhale each other, she crossed her arms and started tapping her foot. “Um, hello! Another person standing here...ahem...AHEM!” With a loud smacking noise they finally pulled apart, both panting, their eyes full of dark heat. “Puppy...Adam...over here!”

“Wha?” he said but continued to gawp at Kris. The gorgeous god slowly licked his lips and Adam let out a tiny, helpless whimper. I’m doomed.

“Let’s get going. You two can ravage each other later and Adam, you’re still barefoot! Go get some shoes on.”

“Shoes...yeah...yeah...where are my shoes, Ali?” he asked in a breathy voice, still unable to tear his eyes away from the stunning vision that was surely going to end him.

Alisan burst out laughing and grabbed him by the elbow. “Come on, you besotted fool.” She led him back to his bedroom but he kept peeking over his shoulder as they went down the hall.

“Did you see him! So fucking sexy...oh my god, Ali, he’s wearing eyelinerrrr,” Adam whined, “and his hair...it’s all styled and sticking up...oh god...those pants!” He flopped back onto his bed dramatically, exactly like a girl in her tweens who’d just gotten off the phone with a hot crush.

“Too adorable, puppy. You know, you’re totally reminding me of middle school right now, especially with the way you look tonight,” she said with a chuckle and started rummaging through his closet for socks and appropriate footwear. Adam groaned and flung an arm over his face, thinking that it would be a miracle if he got through whatever Kris had planned without fucking him senseless. Multiple times...without a condom oh my fucking god!

Alisan had to practically drag him out the door to keep him from attacking Kris and his hot lover was making it even harder, smirking at him all sexily like that. With a final moan of longing, Adam allowed his best friend to pull him from the apartment and down the stairs.

“How long did he say he needed?” Adam asked as they started walking down the street together, boots and heels clicking rhythmically on the sidewalk. Please let it be a short time. The image of dark, sexy Kris was imprinted on his brain, taunting him, and he couldn’t wait to get back and have that man all to himself.

“How long did he say he needed?” Adam asked as they started walking down the street together, boots and heels clicking rhythmically on the sidewalk. Please let it be a short time. The image of dark, sexy Kris was imprinted on his brain, taunting him, and he couldn’t wait to get back and have that man all to himself.

“About an hour,” she replied and then playfully smacked him on the shoulder. “So now I’m not good enough for you anymore, huh?”

“Aww, don’t be like that...you know I love you, but dayum!” He shook his head and suddenly spotted Kris’ car on the side of the road. “Hey, that’s...”

“Oh no you don’t,” Alisan said, quickly steering him away from the vehicle.

“Why? What’s in there?” he asked with a growing, curious smile and tried to peer into the car. He saw a flash of a medium sized shiny box before Alisan tugged hard on his arm and led him away. The two friends continued to the coffee shop, sat down in a booth together and ordered their drinks. Now that Adam was further from the magnetic force of his boyfriend, he found he could concentrate better on Alisan. “So, what’s new with you chica?”
“Hmm, well remember how I told you last week that I was being considered for a promotion at work?”

“Oh wow! Did you get it?”

“Yup! You are looking at the new manager of Spin City!”

“Fantastic! You totally deserve that after all this time,” he said, beaming happily at her. “Does that mean I get manager discounts on CDs now?”

Alisan snorted into her coffee. “Only if you’re a good puppy,” she winked and Adam stuck his tongue out at her. “So your new job seems to be going well. Opening night was kick ass!”

She was right. The audience had given him a standing ovation after his set and called for an encore. It was wonderful to be appreciated for his artistry again, and he’d even seen a few faces that he recognized from the old club that had been there just to hear him sing. “Thanks. I really like it. Only problem is that they don’t need me to work often enough to pay the bills.” The corners of his mouth tugged down a bit and he started to pick at his nail polish. “Sheila thinks I should get a day job, something where I can interact with the public and maybe meet new people.”

“That’s a really good suggestion. I know,” she said in a placating tone when he looked disappointed that she hadn’t said it was the worst idea ever, “you’re not good with that kind of thing, but that doesn’t mean you can’t learn to be.”

“But I’m terrible at small talk and…what if I had to work with guys?” He wrung his hands anxiously at the thought of this. It would be so awkward and nerve-wracking.

Alisan quirked up an eyebrow at him. “Adam, I know you’re not really scared of anyone hurting you now,” she said calmly, sounding sure of her statement.

He sighed and flicked his coffee cup a few times with a half painted fingernail. “No, but…I don’t even know what to do with guys my own age.” Except fuck them, and that’s obviously out of the question. “Maybe hanging out with Matt will help. If that goes well, then I might consider this day job thing.”

“I’m really proud of you, you know,” Alisan said, looking into his eyes warmly.

He picked up her hand and kissed the back of it with a soft smile on his lips. “Thanks, Ali.”

They shared a silent moment of affection, the kind that only two lifelong friends could really understand. It was a bit like appreciating a well-worn jacket that was still beautiful and only grew more so with time. “Here…I got you something.” Alisan took a small blue box out of her pocket and handed it to Adam. He opened the lid and grinned widely at the gorgeous set of turquoise and shell swirl guages, thinking that the earrings would look even more amazing in the sun.

“Perfect! You always know exactly the right thing to get me.” He leaned across the table and pecked her on the cheek. “So, you’re coming to my birthday dinner tomorrow night, right?”

“Wouldn’t miss it, sweetie.” They chatted for a little longer about Alisan’s dismal dating situation until she checked her watch and said it was finally time for him to go back to his apartment.
Adam’s face lit up like a thousand watt bulb and he tried to get out of the booth so fast that he banged his knee on the table, which slowed him down about as much as a pebble would hinder a cheetah chasing his dinner. “Thanks Ali love you so much thanks for the earrings see you tomorrow,” he said all at once and went to kiss her on the cheek but missed and got her ear instead. She just laughed at him as he made a beeline for the door, completely forgetting to pay for his coffee. He tried to walk the few blocks home but got too excited and ended up half jogging, half skipping the rest of the way, his mind full of Kris Kris Kris Kris.

The stairs must have been replaced by an out of control escalator because there was no other way to explain how he’d managed to get up them in about two seconds flat. And his key was really a magic wand that made the door disappear to reveal the man who was causing Adam’s body to thrum with anticipation.

“Welcome home, gorgeous,” said Kris with a glowing smile, “and Happy Birthday.”

“Wow.” Adam’s senses were all on alert and his apartment had never witnessed such a romantic scene. The only light in the living room came from two red candles gracing his beat up coffee table - all scuff marks and dents hidden by a pristine white cloth. The low table was beautifully set for two; white plates shone in the candlelight and the flickering of a flame danced in the dark glass of a bottle of wine. A delicious aroma filled the air and the soft music playing in the background set the mood perfectly. Adam’s mouth began to water, not only for the food he could smell but also for the remarkable creature standing before him, the centerpiece to this magnificent picture who had just welcomed him home. I want to hear those words every day for the rest of my life.

As he gazed into Kris’ gleaming eyes, Adam felt overwhelmed by the dizzying combination of love and lust pumping throughout his veins. He knew his mouth was hanging open a bit and that he must look like a startled deer. “Come here,” he managed to get out as he set down the box of earrings on the table by the door.

Kris obliged at once and allowed Adam to envelop his smaller body; they shared a deep kiss that alternated between tender and ravenous, their bodies pressed firmly together, fingers raking through each other’s hair, and hands sliding down to cup and massage rounded flesh. About three full minutes later, Kris pulled back and swallowed thickly. “You look incredible, beautiful…amazing,” he rasped as he ran his thumb across a few freckles.

“Me?” Adam responded incredulously. “Are you kidding? You’re the stuff of wet dreams! Eyeliner…leather,” he moaned as he nuzzled behind Kris’ ear, “god…you even smell like heaven.” He inhaled the heady scent of cologne mixed with hot man and started nibbling on his boyfriend’s neck while his hand automatically sought the prize outlined so prominently by those tight pants. “Angel…my dark, sexy angel…” Adam breathed, powerless to stop touching and rubbing, reveling in the noises he was eliciting from his lover.

“He’s a man,” Kris answered, his voice husky with desire. “I thought you knew!”

“Adam…oh god, I want…so bad…” Kris groaned, “but I made you…mmm….dinner,” he panted as he swiveled into Adam’s palm.

“You what?” I must have misheard him. Adam stepped back a foot and licked his lips at the sight of the even larger bulge now straining to be freed from its prison.

“I cooked…made you a birthday dinner.” Kris shook his head and took a few steadying breaths. He indicated the coffee table and the two large pillows on either side of it. Have a seat and I’ll serve you, baby.”
Kris started to laugh at Adam’s wide eyes and expression of disbelief. “I promise that I won’t poison you.”

“But you don’t cook! How on earth…”

“Just sit down,” he chuckled as he picked up the two plates and disappeared into the kitchen.

Adam settled onto one of the pillows and tried to absorb the fact that his boyfriend, who had finally learned how to chop vegetables properly, actually made him an entire meal. Wow... just... wow. He sniffed the air and detected the nutty scent of Jasmine rice and... fish... Salmon, seasoned somehow. “Unbelievable,” he muttered to himself, still trying to figure out how this was possible.

Kris returned and laid down the plates full of blackened salmon, rice and salad with a self-satisfied grin. He sat on the pillow, crossed his legs and began pouring the wine. When the glasses were half full, he held up his goblet and motioned for a still stunned Adam to do the same. “Happy Birthday, lover, and may we share countless more together.”

“Thank you. I don’t even know what to say. This is really... I mean... I’m so touched, angel,” Adam said sincerely. This is true love. He brought his glass to Kris’ and sniffled a bit as his heart seemed to grow a few sizes larger to accommodate the overflow of love he felt.

“Hope you can still say that after you taste it, but I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised,” Kris said. “Now come on and try a bite so I can stop worrying already.”

Adam knew that even if it was awful it would be wonderful just because of the effort Kris had made. He looked at his plate and his expert eye could already tell that the salmon would be excellent. Kris watched with brows knit together as Adam scooped up some rice together with a piece of fish and put the fork in his mouth. He chewed a few times and was amazed all over again, wondering if his boyfriend had been merely acting like he couldn’t cook all along. Although it wasn’t quite gourmet quality, it was certainly delicious; the salmon flaked easily and the rice stuck together just right without being mushy. “Kris! This is incredible!” Adam exclaimed and took another forkful.

“Really?”

“Yes! I mean it’s really, really good. I’m so impressed!”

“Phew!” Kris sighed and visibly relaxed. “I’m glad everything turned out okay. I had to practice the rice a lot... it’s way trickier than I thought it would be.”

Oh my god. He must have spent so much time on this. Adam put down his fork, rose to his knees and leaned across the table. “I can’t believe you did all this for me,” he murmured. “I love you so much.”

“I love you, too, baby.”

They met in the middle of the table just like a scene from a movie, two pairs of lips pressed together surrounded by candlelight and a romantic ambiance, a brief touch of affection before settling back down to enjoy their meal.

“You should’ve seen the first time I tried to cook salmon a few weeks ago,” said Kris, “I made such
a mess out of it and got burned by the oil splattering all over my arm,” he snorted. “And Matt was
my guinea pig…such a good sport.”

“Wow. You’ve had this planned for a long time!”

“Yep, and wait until you see what’s for dessert. I guarantee that you’ll love it.”

The thought occurred to Adam that he wasn’t worth this kind of effort, but he beat back the sneaky
thing the best he could, knowing that it would pop up again at some point for a rematch. I am worth
it…I am. “You made dessert, too?”

“In a manner of speaking,” Kris smirked with a seductive look that didn’t seem to go with food. It
did excite a certain part of Adam’s body quite effectively, however, and he spent the rest of dinner
trying not to launch over the table and fuck the devastating man right into the floor.

When they were finished eating, Kris cleared the coffee table and refused to let Adam help. It felt
both strange and wonderful to sit on his ass and be waited on. Adam was naturally a very nurturing
person and although most of the world never got to see that side of him, people he trusted knew it to
be one of his strongest and most endearing qualities.

“Allright,” Kris said after everything was put away, “dessert will require a change of clothing…for
you that is.”

“Aww, I was hoping for no clothing at all,” Adam pouted as he got up from the floor.

“Patience, lover, that comes later. Now go change into your black sleep pants and nothing else…and
I mean nothing else,” he said with a meaningful glance at Adam’s crotch.

Adam’s dick twitched at that and he hurried off to comply, eager to see what was next on Kris’
agenda. He’d also spotted that shiny box in the corner of the room and felt a little like a giddy child,
wondering what could possibly be inside. While changing into his sleep pants (and nothing else), he
noticed that he was already sporting a semi just in anticipation.

God he makes me crazy. How the
hell did I get so lucky?

When he saw that the couch and coffee table had been pushed back to the wall and a single kitchen
chair stood in the center of the now fully lit room, Adam’s imagination began to run wild and his
pulse sped up. Oh Jesus…if this is what I think it is…oh my fucking… Kris took him by the hand and
led him to the chair. “Sit,” he commanded, pressing down on Adam’s bare shoulders while staring
heatedly into his eyes and looking less like a rabbit than ever before.

More like a panther. He shuddered and felt his nipples harden under that fiery gaze as Kris straddled
him and licked across the seam of his lips. “Only two rules to this show,” the dark man whispered,
“no touching me and no touching yourself.”

“Fuck…oh god…” he groaned, bucking his hips a little and trying to kiss that tempting mouth but
Kris got up, dragging a finger under Adam’s chin as he retreated and walked to the stereo, leaving
Adam grasping at the air and panting for more. “Shit…shit,” he puffed.

Kris pressed play and stood about five feet from the chair, facing away as a steady trance-like dance
beat began to ooze from the speakers – sensual, rhythmic sounds washing over Adam’s ears that
made his blood boil with desire. Slim leather hips started to sway in time to the music as a silky voice
sang:
“I liked it
I liked it a lot
Steep there, sooner or not
Right there, there on the ground”

Completely spellbound and breathing heavily, Adam watched Kris turn around and slide one hand down to rub his swollen bulge while pulling up the hem of his shirt with the other. *I’m not going to make it…fuck.* Smooth skin and hard muscle was revealed inch by inch by calloused fingers and the whispy lyrics continued:

“I like everything about you
I like everything we try
I like everything we did then
I liked it so good inside,
So good inside”

Adam whined under his breath, eyes wide and glued to the tantalizing man as up and up went the black fabric, slowly teasing until Kris finally pulled it over his head and flung it aside. The sleep pants were tented obscenely with Adam’s naked, pulsing dick and he felt a dribble of wetness slither down his inner thigh.

“Take this
You did it a lot
It's better
Better then once”

Kris was a predator on the prowl, stalking towards the chair and pinching his nipples the way that Adam wanted to right fucking now. But he couldn’t touch, and he sat there tortured and helpless as Kris propped a foot on Adam’s thigh and unzipped his black boot tooth by tooth.

“Shit…you dirty, dirty tease,” he groaned hoarsely as Kris removed his other boot in the same fashion followed by both socks.

Kris hummed and clasped his hands behind his head, dancing over Adam’s lap without contact, gyrating and thrusting all that deliciousness just millimeters from the peak of the tent before backing off again. Chest rising and falling in great heaves, Adam tried to swallow but found that his throat was completely dry.* Help.*

“I liked it
I liked it a lot
I liked it
I liked it a lot”

Kris suddenly did a body drop, pulled himself up by his dick and popped open the button of his pants. Adam gasped and nearly leapt out of the chair, feverish with want now. “Kris…Kris…” he panted. It was taking every bit of willpower to say put and to keep his hands at his sides, but the true test came when that evil beast of seduction bent all the way over right it front of Adam and started tugging down the leather, exposing a perfect ass clad in nothing but a black g-string.

Adam moaned loudly with longing and reached out a trembling hand, frantic to feel, to claim all that beauty with his aching, leaking cock. “Please,” he begged, but Kris just continued to peel off the
tight pants and kicked them out of the way. Naked save for a small amount of cotton and the ever present pendant that rightly declared him to be a hazard, he proceeded to writhe in the middle of the floor in time to the hypnotic beats, occasionally stroking himself and taunting Adam by pulling the string down a few inches before letting it snap back in place.

“I liked it so good inside
So good inside”

“Goddamnit!” Never before had Adam been so turned on, so ready and needy and yet denied the pleasure he sought. He gripped the edges of the chair and licked his lips over and over again, wanting…desperate for the gorgeous body on display like he needed it to breathe, his dick leaping under the soft fabric of his pants.

Kris danced ever closer, then turned on the spot and dropped onto Adam’s lap. “Oh god…yessss,” he hissed in relief as Kris began to roll and swivel his hips repeatedly, the muscles in his bare back sliding under hot skin and Adam wanted to lick, to bite the flesh rippling before him. Around and around Kris circled into Adam’s length faster and harder until the end was in sight, but no – the cruel man sprang up and out of reach to resume the dance. “Fuck!” Adam cried, letting go of the chair and half standing up in an attempt to bring his lover back.

Quivering on the edge, he clenched his fingers in sexual frustration, took in a huge breath and managed to sit back down. “I can’t…I need…” he whispered imploringly. After another minute of watching the erotic scene, he began to fuck the air in little thrusts until Kris finally came back. The song looped and continued to play as Kris slipped out of the flimsy underwear and trailed them over Adam’s bare chest. He bent his head and tried to sniff them, lick them, anything to get more of his sexy boyfriend, who allowed him one whiff and then threw the garment over Adam’s head. “Lover,” Kris purred and jerked his hips side-to-side, forward and backward.

“I like everything about you
I like everything we try
Right there, there on the ground”

Adam was beyond words now; all he could do was whimper and stare at the inches of hot meat bobbing before him with every movement of those wicked hips. At long last Kris took mercy, straddled Adam’s lap and began to grind into his seeping, rigid cock. He grasped the back of the chair went to town like a dominant top fucking Adam relentlessly, panting and throwing fireballs with his eyes. “Take it…take it,” he growled.

With every snap of Kris’ hips Adam felt the pleasure mount and his eyes rolled back in ecstasy, eyelids fluttering, fingers clenching, every nerve clanging like tiny wind chimes being struck by a heavy mallet. “Oh…ohhh god…yes!” Little points of light exploded behind his eyes and he wasted no time in using the energy of his orgasm to tackle Kris to the ground and kiss the living daylights out of him, panting, groaning and licking into his mouth hungrily.

“I liked it
I liked it a lot”

Kris wrapped his arms and legs around Adam and tried to get himself off, but Adam was having none of that. Full of lusty greed, he slid down his lover’s body and immediately started to swallow and slurp that luscious dick like a world-class cock sucker. It didn’t take long before Kris tensed and cried out his release, letting Adam milk and drink him all up until they were both weak, shivering messes of spent flesh.
“What...the hell?” Adam asked into Kris’ chest as his lungs tried to recover. “Where...the fuck did you...learn that?”

“New kind of...class,” answered Kris, equally winded. “They teach you...how to cook and strip at the...same time,” he chuckled and then coughed a few times.

Adam laughed so hard that he started to wheeze and rolled onto his back, his whole body shaking with mirth. “I love you so fucking much,” he said when he could finally breathe properly.

It turned out that Kris had a few more surprises up his sleeve. He had indeed brought a real dessert although he hadn’t made it. “I do have my limits,” he grinned as he dished out generous helpings of peach cobbler into two bowls. Adam was having a hard time not touching his hot boyfriend, who had only put on a pair of boxer briefs after washing up. He continued to rub and squeeze Kris’ nipples from behind while nibbling at his neck, making him gasp as he tried to get forks out of the drawer. “Baby, I’m going to put more clothes on if you don’t stop,” he teased.

“Mmmm, but you taste so yummy, angel,” he replied and worried his teeth into a particularly tender muscle.

“Adam,” Kris groaned, “I have more presents for you...but you have to behave if you want them otherwise we’ll just be fucking all night long.”

“Sounds good to me,” he murmured, thinking about how amazing it was going to feel without any barrier between them. “I think I’ve been miraculously patient, don’t you?” But he let go of Kris anyway because he knew they had lots of time for that and he really did want more presents. *Cooking, lap dances...what could possibly top that?* Kris pecked him on the cheek and they sat down on the couch to enjoy the sweet and juicy dessert, which was quite good for being store bought.

“So, your next gift is...” Kris put down his bowl and went to retrieve his guitar from the corner of the room. “…a song that I wrote for you.” He sat down on the kitchen chair that was still in the middle of the room and began to tune the instrument.

Adam beamed through a watery smile. “You did?”

“Uh huh. And it’s not exactly a love song, but it goes really well with what’s inside that box over there.” *He loves me so much.* Adam could suddenly feel it deep down in his soul like an all encompassing, ethereal bear hug, warm and soft and comforting. It hiked up his sense of security a few notches and he felt a tear gathering in the corner of his eye. He sniffed, wiped it away and concentrated as Kris started to strum and sing softly.

“I wake up, put my poker face on
It's roughly the same hand
I was dealt yesterday
I stand up and stare out at the skyline
It's roughly the same town
That I saw yesterday

Living doesn't come first try
It takes a lifetime getting it right"

Adam’s heart swelled with the crescendo of Kris’ voice and passion as it poured out of those beautiful lips.

“It takes a lifetime to learn how to sing
To find my place in the worlds symphony
To become the man today
The man I thought I could be

It takes a lifetime
It takes a lifetime”

He closed his eyes and let the words of hope and fulfillment surround his being, a message carried on the breath of an angel. Adam caressed his bracelet as the song came down in volume and did his best not to burst into tears.

“I wake up and bandage these scars
The scars of my heart
That prove that I’m still alive
That I’m still alive
Living doesn’t come first try
It takes a lifetime getting it right”

“I’m still alive. After everything that happened to me…I’m still here and look what I have now…look at all the things I’ve learned, how much love is in my life… He opened his eyes and saw his lover’s head bent down as he sang his heart out and noticed a shiny track of wetness painted down his face. It’s just as much about him as it is me.

“It takes a lifetime to learn how to sing
To find my place in the worlds symphony
To become the man today
The man I thought I could be
The man I thought I could be

It takes a lifetime
It takes a lifetime”

The last words came out as a whisper and Kris looked up at Adam with shimmering eyes. “I love you, my brave man.”

Adam got up and pulled Kris back to the couch with him. “I love you, too…Mister courageous, wild child,” he said as they cuddled. “Thank you.” A memory of fear at this kind of intimacy blew in like the wind and made Adam smile at how far he’d come since then. After a few minutes of snuggling and gentle kisses, Kris went to get the shiny box that had piqued Adam’s curiosity ever since he saw it in the car. He clapped his hands excitedly and tore open the silver, glittery paper.

“I…I really hope it’s okay,” said Kris, sounding a little nervous.

“Seriously? You’re worried after all the incredible things you’ve already done for me tonight?” He winked, ran his thumbnail across the seam to sever the tape and opened the box. “Kris…” he gasped. Inside Adam saw the unmistakable shape of a plastic sand bucket. Hands shaking a little, he pulled
the bright orange container out of the box along with a blue toy shovel, a small dump truck, a rake and…a red cape. Oh my god, it’s my dream. He stared at Kris, holding the remnants of his childhood like precious jewels as memories full of laughter and joy flooded his brain. “You…you…”

Gently, tenderly, he laid the gifts on his coffee table and turned to the incredible person sitting next to him, but he couldn’t find any words to express his utter gratitude and love at how much faith Kris had in his ability to heal. Without a sound, he scooped up his boyfriend and carried him to the bedroom.

“Angel,” he said as he lowered them down to the bed, “I can feel your love…I know it way down in me. Let me love you now.”

Kris gazed up at him and smiled softly. He thumbed Adam’s mouth and shivered when the tip was sucked in by freckled lips. “I’m ready. I want you.”

Adam tongued Kris’ thumb, feeling peaceful and unhurried as the slow waves of desire washed over his body and mind. He got up briefly to get some lube and undress and marveled at the fact that he might never wear a condom again. “My sweet lover,” he murmured, crawling over Kris and laying down tender kisses like tiny deposits of adoration that he hoped would soak right into Kris’ skin. “So beautiful.”

Kris moaned softly, arching into touches and lips, breath hitching when Adam removed his briefs and graced his length with a fingertip. “Love you,” he sighed, drew up his knees and let them fall open.

Adam took it all in, Kris’ chest rising and falling slowly, his deep brown eyes speaking of trust and commitment, and his body willing and completely open. All for me…for me. He settled between his lover’s legs and rubbed his freckled face up and down Kris’ hardening member, burying his nose in the essence of maleness and inhaling the scent.

“Adam,” Kris whispered with a hint of need.

He slipped out his long tongue and starting licking as he continued to nuzzle, wanting Kris’ smell to linger on his naked face. A whimper was the cue to start bathing Kris’ entrance with wetness.

“Lover…lover,” Adam repeated like a mantra in between swaths of his tongue as he lubed up his fingers.

“Please…want to feel you…” Kris spread his legs even wider like his body was begging to be filled with more than the two digits sliding in and out of his hole.

This is it. I’m really going to… A sudden thrill rushed into Adam’s chest as he lined up his unsheathed, slicked length. He hesitated only an instant and then pushed the head in slowly and felt Kris accept him wholly. A long sigh escaped his lips when the rim passed through and he heard a matching sound from Kris. Further and deeper he went until their bodies were flush.

“Wow,” Kris breathed, staring at Adam in wonder. “S-so…”

Adam shuddered and gasped. The feeling was exquisite, like every millimeter of skin was being licked by hundreds of tiny tongues. “Oh god…angel, it feels so good,” he moaned.

“Move, baby…move,” said Kris as he wrapped his limbs around Adam and kissed his neck.
He drew back and slid in again, getting lost in the sensations of heightened pleasure fluttering like intoxicated butterflies careening around inside his body. Sighs and groans filled the air as the two men abandoned all restraint and danced the steps of lovemaking with increasing vigor. Adam dug his knees and toes into the mattress and began to thrust eagerly, overwhelmed with bliss, drowning in Kris’ chocolate eyes that said “I’m yours forever.”

Adam angled his hips a bit and knew by Kris’ sudden cry that he’d hit the spot. He did it again and again, causing his sweet love to chant his name repeatedly…louder and more desperate every time.

“OH!” Adam shouted unexpectedly when Kris clenched down on his bare length in a glorious burst of pleasure. “Again…angel…do that again!”

Kris arched his back, thrust upwards and tightened his muscles all in one movement and they both convulsed and cried out their climax together, hot cum spilling from Kris’ untouched member as Adam’s emptied into his lover for the first time. Lips crashed and they moaned throatily into each other’s mouths in the aftershocks of their orgasms until they finally collapsed.

Neither moved for a long time, feeling so close and connected that they never wanted it to end. Finally Adam could tell that Kris was having a hard time breathing under his dead weight and he lifted up to his elbows. “That was so incredible.” And we get to do that all the time now!

“Don’t pull out, stay inside me forever, Adam,” Kris said seriously as if by asking he could really make it happen.

“I would if I could, angel.” Adam kissed his swollen lips and then had a flash of inspiration. “One more thing,” he said as he drew back despite Kris’ protests. My cum is in there. Something about that fact made Adam feel as if they had achieved a goal of sorts. He wiggled down and pushed his boyfriend’s knees back. “Wow.” Milky white seed was leaking onto the bed and Adam started lapping it up, becoming instantly addicted to the intimate elixir of Kris’ taste and his own.

“Oh god…baby…” Kris groaned as an inebriated Adam licked him clean.

Happy Birthday to me.

Chapter 43

Kris got home from class Wednesday night feeling exhausted and counting down the days until graduation. Adam’s impending phone call was the only reason that he didn’t fall into bed immediately after dropping his bag on the bedroom floor. As much as he enjoyed school, Kris had to admit that at this point he’d rather be spending his Monday and Wednesday evenings actually working on his demo instead of learning about theory. Applesauce brain. That’s what his mom used to call it when he was younger.

He sat on the edge of his bed waiting and staring at a crack in the wall. The synapses that were supposed to be firing had obviously taken a nap on the job and Kris started zoning out. It kind of looks like a swan neck. After ten minutes of this he shook his head and decided that Adam must be home from his parent’s house by now. He pulled out his phone and flopped onto his back.
“Oh thank god you’re there…I’m so damn tired I couldn’t wait for you to call.”

“It’s all right,” Adam said softly, “I just got in.”

Kris sat up and frowned at the tinge of sadness he heard in his boyfriend’s voice. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. It’s just that this was my last dinner with my brother. He’s leaving this weekend and…I’m really going to miss him.” Adam said in a way that Kris could tell he was more upset than he was letting on. “Neil is more than a brother to me,” he continued, “he’s been like a best friend all these years, especially after high school.”

_I bet…all that social isolation._ It made Kris consider that Neil’s move might be a bigger loss of support than he’d first imagined. “I’m so sorry, baby. I really hope that you two get to visit each other a lot.” He waited for a reply but only silence met his ear. “Adam?”

“I’m here. I think…maybe I need more friends. I mean, it’s not that I don’t want to hang out with you all the time because I do,” he said with a heavy sigh, “I don’t know…it just feels like when we’re not together that I have very few people to be around. I guess I used to be okay with that in a way, I mean not really because it’s lonely but at least it was safe. And now Neil will be gone, and…I can’t explain it.”

Although Adam was clearly sad, Kris found he was quite happy upon hearing this because it was a good step in the right direction towards Adam’s recovery and also towards moving in together, which he was craving more and more as the days passed. “It’s okay, I understand…really, and I don’t think people are meant to be alone as much as you’ve been,” he said sympathetically. “Just take it one step at a time. Tomorrow night you’ll get to meet Matt and maybe you guys will click.”

Now that he was thinking about friendships, Kris realized that ever since he and Adam had met, there were people in his life that he’d pretty much neglected. He’d even been on the verge of asking Katy from Starbucks if she wanted to hang out sometime. _I need to fix that._ A rustling and shifting noise came from the other end; Kris imagined his lover getting comfortable on the bed and he suddenly wished he were there so they could cuddle and kiss.

“Angel?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“What are you going to tell him about me?” Adam had finally decided that it would be best to give Matt a heads up of sorts.

“Well, what do you want me to tell him?”

“I don’t want him to touch me,” he said promptly. “I’ll shake his hand but that’s it, and you can say that…that…I’ve had…fuck, I don’t know,” he grumbled.

_My sweet man. This is so difficult for him._ “How about…you’re not comfortable around guys you don’t know. You’ve had some bad experiences and not to be offended if things get awkward. And don’t ask personal questions.”

“Yeah, that’s actually pretty good! Thank you, really…you’re always so patient with me. I don’t know how you do it.”

Kris smiled at Adam’s obvious relief and lay back down on the bed. “It’s not that hard. I love you,”
he said simply and stifled a yawn with his knuckles. “Plus, you make it worth my while,” he added with a playful chuckle.

“Hmmm, wish I could make it worth your while right now. I bet you’re so cute over there, all sleepy and rabbity,” Adam purred.

“Rabbity?” he snorted, “and what exactly does that mean?” Kris stretched his legs and then curled up on his side with the phone hot against his ear.

“You know, fluffy and soft. Just right for snuggling…and petting,” Adam said a little wickedly.

“Petting, mmmm, now I definitely like the sound of that. If I wasn’t so tired I’d come over for some.” Although he felt like he could sleep for a week, Kris’ dick seemed to have a mind of its own and was already stirring to life at the sound of that teasing voice.

“I’d be so gentle,” Adam murmured, “I’d stroke you until you came and then you could fall asleep in my arms.”

Kris moaned longingly, thinking about the day when they would be in bed together every night and he could almost feel those strong freckled arms holding him close. “That sounds like heaven, baby…can you magic me there?” he said sleepily despite his arousal.

Adam giggled and then started to hum that familiar, nameless tune - the one Kris had heard a few words of outside Adam’s door a couple weeks ago. It was so soothing that he let out a jaw-cracking yawn and nestled into his pillow. “So nice…don’t stop.” The melody floated into his ear and over his body, a cozy blanket spun by his adoring lover’s angelic intonations. Kris’ breathing slowed and he was headed right for dreamland when Adam whispered goodnight with love and ended the call.

The next day a well rested Kris asked Matt to have lunch with him in the food court so they could talk about their plans for the evening and Adam. Alisan was the one who’d come up with the idea that everyone meet up at Hugo’s because they all knew where the popular diner was and it had a nice, casual atmosphere. Abandoning his usual choice of sushi, Kris opted for a stir-fry today and sat in one of those horribly uncomfortable plastic and metal chairs across from Matt. He had a hunch that they were designed that way on purpose so that people would get up quicker to make room for more customers. “So, about tonight,” he began after a bite of chicken and snap peas, “I just want to let you know a few things about Adam before you meet him.”

“You know, I’ve kind of guessed that he’s got some issues,” said Matt as though he’d anticipated what Kris was going to say.

“Really?”

“Yeah. I mean there was that time you said he had a fit back when you guys were first hanging out, and then he took off and you couldn’t find him and you were a mess, man. And then that thing happened, whatever it was, when you had to leave work for an emergency.”

Kris scratched the back of his neck and sighed. “I can’t really get into details, but he’s had some bad experiences in his life and he’s not comfortable around guys he doesn’t know.”

“Okay, so what does that mean?” Matt asked sounding genuinely concerned.

“It means that you can shake his hand but don’t touch him otherwise. Don’t ask personal questions,
and if things get awkward because he’s unsure of himself or gets tense, don’t take it personally, alright?"

“No problem. I know he’s really important to you and if you love him then he must be a pretty amazing guy, so I’m not going to judge,” he said smiling.

*Wow, he really cares. Things are going to be fine. “Thanks. I really appreciate that.”*

Matt twirled his spork around his fingers and leaned on the table in a casual manner, but his eyes were mischievous. “So will he be upset if I hit on his best friend?”

“Oh god, please don’t,” Kris pleaded, “because I honestly don’t know what would happen and we don’t need any drama.”

“Fine, fine, but if she flirts with me then he can’t complain. After all, I am irresistible!” he chuckled and then rolled his eyes at Kris’ furrowed brows. “Oh stop worrying, I’ll be good.”

After work, the two friends went home to change and Kris decided to pack his weekend bag just in case he wanted to go home with Adam after dinner. He caught Matt preening in the bathroom mirror and laughed at him until he got the middle finger in response.

“Same to you,” Kris chortled as he threw his toothbrush into his bag. *Maybe I should start keeping one at his place. I could keep other things there, too.* As he thought about this, he was reminded that Adam would be moving soon. They’d gone apartment hunting again last Saturday and Adam had filled out applications for a few landlords that he was waiting to hear back from. It wasn’t easy to rent in LA since there was so much competition for good places. *We’re going to live together…soon I think.* A flutter of excitement whirred in his chest like a spinning toy top and he giggled to himself. “You ready yet, pretty boy?” he called from the living room when he was done packing.

They rode together in Matt’s car and arrived right on time at seven o’clock. Kris saw Adam’s black Honda Coupe outside as they walked to the front doors. *Already here. Damn, why am I so nervous?* He supposed he was anxious for Adam and he just really wanted things to go well. *Chill. You need to be calm for him.* He took a deep breath and they went inside. After looking around a bit, Kris spotted Alisan waving from a booth on the other side of the restaurant and a gorgeous Adam sitting beside her. *Just like the first time I met him at Macy’s…perfect, incredible.* His heart skipped a beat when they drew nearer to the table because there was his love, gazing at him with a nervous smile and god he looked like a child and a fierce lion all at once. Adam and Alisan stood up and moved to greet Matt, but Kris walked straight up to his boyfriend and planted a large, wet kiss on his glossy lips. *Shiny.* Adam’s breath hitched in surprise but then Kris felt the tall man relax into the touch. *Wherever those freckles are is home.*

“They always do this,” he heard Alisan say in a long-suffering tone as they kissed more deeply, “can’t seem to help themselves. I’m Alisan,” she said to Matt, “but you can call me Ali.”

Kris pulled back just in time to see his roommate smile widely and shake Alisan’s hand. “Matt,” he returned in a delighted tone.

“Sorry guys,” Kris said even though he didn’t feel apologetic in the least. He’d gone on pure instinct and by the calmer expression on Adam’s face, he knew it had been the right thing to do. “Adam, meet my roommate, co-worker and best friend.” The two strangers shook hands briefly. “Matt, this is my boyfriend, my lover…my partner.” Said partner glanced at Kris with a beaming smile and then returned to Matt.
“Nice to finally meet you properly.”

“Likewise.”

They all sat down in the booth with Adam and Alisan on one side and Kris and Matt on the other. Kris made sure that he and Adam were facing each other and gave the window seats to the two best friends. Their server, a young man who was flustered and seemed to be in a hurry, took their drink orders and scurried off.

“Well that was friendly,” Kris snorted, “it’s not even that busy tonight.”

“Maybe he’s got a hot date back in the kitchen,” joked Matt.

Alisan and Kris chuckled and the corner of Adam’s mouth twitched as he quietly perused the menu. He’s going to be fine. Kris shifted his feet so that they were wrapped around Adam’s ankles and saw a slow smile form on his lover’s lips.

“So Matt, you have to tell me how you and Kris ended up working at such a god awful store,” said Alisan shaking her head in distaste.

“Eh, it pays the bills,” he replied and Kris agreed. “But what’s wrong with Macy’s?” he asked.

“Overpriced and tacky,” Adam mumbled without looking up from his menu, but then he took a swift breath and made eye contact with Matt. “Sorry.”

“It’s fine,” said Matt genially, “I don’t even shop there and you’re right about it being overpriced. We got an order of shoes in last week that were a hundred dollars a pair and I know I’ve seen the exact same ones at Tony K’s for half that.”

“Now that’s a good store,” Adam said with an emphatic nod and went back to the menu.

After the still harassed server returned with drinks and quickly took down their orders, Matt spotted a guy with an Indianapolis Colts sweatshirt on and made a comment about the Superbowl coming up on Sunday.

“Pssht, I know that they’re the favorites to win,” Alisan said as she noted the horseshoe emblem on the man’s shirt, “but the Saints are a good team and I’d be so tickled if Drew Brees won over that neanderthal Manning.”

Three mouths fell open and the men all stared at her.

“What?” she smirked, “can’t a girl like football?”

Matt looked like he’d died and gone to heaven. “Y-you like…” He opened and closed his mouth like a fish but no more words came out.

“Ali, I’ve known you practically my whole life!” Adam exclaimed in surprise. “How did I miss that?”

Alisan laughed at their stunned expressions and took a sip of her iced tea. “I dated a guy a few years ago who was into it and I got hooked. It’s not like you were going to watch it with me,” she said,
rolling her eyes at Adam.

“Oh my god, this is so hilarious,” Kris snickered, “and I think you made Matt speechless which never happens so kudos to you, Ali.”

Adam took in Matt’s ridiculous, bug eyed face and started to chuckle loudly. When Kris saw those blue eyes sparkling with mirth, he did a little happy dance inside and felt the last remnants of tension leave his body. Awesome….just awesome.

After that it seemed that Adam was more relaxed, and although he wasn’t talking much, Kris noticed that he was doing better with Matt than he probably would have a few months ago. He felt proud as he watched his boyfriend loosen up a little even though he was still obviously guarded. Half way through the meal, the four of them were chatting about the best and worst places to have coffee in West Hollywood, which was a great conversation because Adam had much more to say on that topic. Kris caught Matt and Alisan subtly making eyes at each other and tried not to snigger as Adam went on about why he had to drink frappacinos at Starbucks because their straight up brew was so horrible.

“Honestly, they should just call it shitbucks,” he said and looked pleased when Matt laughed at that. “I mean…” But suddenly Adam went deathly pale and stopped speaking. He was a terrified, beautiful sculpted statue, body rigid and eyebrows raised so high that they were in danger of disappearing into his hair.

“Adam,” said Alisan firmly while Kris stood up and grabbed his hand, knowing at once that something had triggered him. Shit, got to get him out of here. He didn’t know what had set him off, but it didn’t matter. “We’ll be right back,” he said calmly, trying not to alarm Matt who was looking confused. Alisan gave him a knowing nod and he heard her tell Matt not to worry.

Adam didn’t respond and just let himself be led to the bathroom still wide-eyed and staring. Kris moved quickly because he was worried that Adam would have a flashback once he came out of the dissociation. When they made it to the thankfully empty men’s room, he turned on the cold water full blast and shoved Adam’s hands under the tap while rubbing them repeatedly. “Come on baby, it’s all right, come on back.” After a few moments, Adam flinched and pulled his hands away, then looked at Kris with those wild eyes that said the memories were mere seconds away. “Hey, I got you… we’re in a bathroom at a restaurant,” Kris said as he cupped his lover’s frightened face and peered intently at him, willing him to return to the present. “Look at me Adam, look at me, my love. I love you and no one is going to hurt you. Look at me.” Experience had taught him not to panic and more than anything Kris just felt sad that Adam still had to endure this kind of pain. So unfair…so unjust.

Water dripped onto the floor from cold, red fingers tipped with black and finally Adam shuddered and focused his eyes. “Kris.”

“I’m here, baby, right here.”

“Devon,” he whispered in a wavering voice. He threw his arms around Kris and began to weep softly.

“It’s all right, lover, it’s okay. I’ve got you.” Kris didn’t know who Devon was, but he held Adam tightly and rubbed his back with steady, soothing circles until the cries faded away.

“That guy out there…he looked exactly like Devon,” Adam muttered into Kris’ shoulder. “I thought…but he’s in jail.”
One of his attackers. God damn them! It was hard not to be furious but he schooled his feelings, knowing that this wasn’t the time to vent. “That’s right. It just looked like him, but it wasn’t.” He lifted Adam’s chin and wiped his thumbs under those crystalline pools of blue, wishing that he could make all the pain and fear vanish with a wave of his hand.

“Yeah, I mean no, now that I think about it…Devon was much taller.” He sniffed and rested his forehead on Kris’ with a heavy sigh.

He’s going to get mad at himself or feel ashamed now…or both, but I know he can work through it.

Adam breathed steadily and hung on to Kris’ hands for a while as if he were using their contact like some sort of anchor to the earth. When he looked up, Kris saw a storm of emotions dancing chaotically on his face and he seemed to be wrestling with himself. “I…er…fuck. Just give me a minute, okay?” Adam said through gritted teeth. He went into a bathroom stall and closed the door. “I’m not shutting you out,” he called, the sound bouncing off lime green tiles, “but I want to handle this on my own.”

“Take your time,” Kris returned. “Do you want me to stay or go back out there without you?”

“Stay,” came the reply, followed by deep inhales of air and long exhales.

So proud of him. Kris also felt good about himself because more than ever he knew he was an equal in this relationship, a partner as he’d told Matt during the introductions. I’m not his rescuer, I’m his lover. As he leaned against the sink and waited, he thought about Adam’s birthday and how confident and sexy he’d felt. It was hard not to wish that he could’ve been that way in his past. Would have saved me a lot of heartache. He was both dreading and looking forward to Valentine’s Day and really hoped that Adam had something special planned to take his mind off of the bad memories.

“Hollandaise sauce,” said Adam suddenly from the stall.

Ooh, that’s a good one. I would never be able to make it. Adam had told Kris about the cooking analogy and how it helped to stay focused on the big picture in times like these. If Sheila had been there, she would have remarked on how well they were both handling this as compared to a short time ago.

A portly man entered the bathroom and started to use the urinal. “Nice place, this diner,” he said to Kris who really hated it when people talked while they peed.

“Mmhm,” he replied, not wanting to be rude but hoping that the guy would get the hint. There was, after all, a bathroom code amongst men declaring that it was unacceptable to talk with your dick hanging out.

“My wife and I come here all the time. We live way on the other side of town, but we love this place so much that we make a special trip every week. Is this your first time eating here?” the guy asked jovially as he seemed to piss forever.

Must have had a lot to drink. Ugh. “Uh no, I’ve been here before.”

“That’s great. What did you order tonight? I got the turkey meatloaf. I swear, no one makes it better, not even my wife,” he chuckled, completely oblivious to Kris’ lack of interest. “She keeps trying to
get the recipe from the cooks, but—"

“Kris? Will you join me in here, please?” The stall door opened and Adam winked flamboyantly at the man who was so startled that he stopped peeing.

Finally. “Don’t mind if I do,” Kris said brightly, trying not to burst out laughing as he stepped inside, also feeling overjoyed that Adam had been successful in overcoming whatever he’d been struggling with.

Adam slid the lock closed and whispered, “thought you could use a rescue.” He giggled quietly when they heard the man clear his throat and resume his task.

“Thank god,” Kris snickered, “although I bet you just wanted to get me in a small space with you,” he smirked.

“Oh Kris! Yes! Oh god, that feels so good!” Adam suddenly said in a loud voice and then stuck his fist in his mouth to keep from laughing.

Zip, flush, wham! The bathroom door rattled on its hinges as the guy fled from the scene.

“You are so bad!” Kris howled, falling against the door and cackling.

They kissed and giggled into each other’s mouths until Adam said they should get back before Alisan made a move on Matt. “Don’t think I didn’t notice them,” he snorted, “and he better watch out because Ali can be quite forward and assertive.” They came out of the stall and pressed their lips together one last time. “Kris,” Adam said more seriously, “thank you, angel.”

“What for?”

“For helping me and not helping me.”

“Anytime, baby, anytime.”

When the couple returned to the table all smiles, both Alisan and Matt looked relieved but quickly arranged their faces into something more neutral. Kris was glad that they weren’t making a big deal out of it and gave his lover’s hand a squeeze before sitting back down.

“So,” Matt began, “Ali just invited herself to come over and watch the Superbowl on Sunday, Kris. What do you think of that?” he asked in a slightly giddy voice.

Adam and Kris exchanged amused glances. “Told you she was assertive,” Adam said and received a light punch on the arm from the spunky woman next to him.

“Watch it buster, I know where you live,” she said, looking like a fierce little kitten, which made Matt sigh dreamily.

Interesting, never would’ve guessed he liked strong types…so different from all the others he’s been attracted to.

“Oh yeah? Well I know your weaknesses,” Adam told her smugly and then leaned over and whispered something in her ear.
“Hmph, fine you win,” she conceded. “So how about it guys? Superbowl party? Adam?”

“Why not? Someone’s got to keep an eye on you,” he teased.

“Oh puhlease,” she scoffed and winked at Matt.

Kris looked around the table and grinned at the fact that his worlds seemed to be coming together. “Sounds great to me, but Adam and I will have to miss halftime.”

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“Hmmm, very sexy, but we’ve done that before. Try another one,” said Kris.

The two lovers were naked in Adam’s bed, lying on their stomachs side by side after some particularly vigorous lovemaking and they were having fun getting inspired for round two.

Adam dragged his finger over the laptop trackpad and clicked play on a three minute clip. “Oh hell yes! We are definitely doing that!” he said enthusiastically when he saw the two men in the video get into position.

“Damn that’s hot! Why didn’t we think of it?” Kris squirmed on the mattress as his body began to respond to the scene. Going to have to do more ‘research.’

“No idea, but I think I should be on top. It’ll be easier because I’m taller and that way your neck won’t get tired,” Adam responded with a shiver. “See how the guy on the bottom has to hold his head up to reach?”

“Good point,” said Kris, starting to writhe a bit more in his aroused state, “but I’ll probably still need a pillow or two.”

Adam nodded, closed the computer and got up to put it on his desk.

Kris watched him and marveled for the umpteenth time at his boyfriend’s stunning form. Those long, graceful limbs, perfectly proportioned body, toned muscles from all the hours at the gym…and freckles. God he’s beautiful. Kris suddenly recalled how much Adam had disliked being naked and exposed when they’d first met. Look at him now.

“See anything you like?” Adam smirked when he caught Kris staring at his growing erection.

“Absolutely,” he said, licking his lips and eagerly welcoming his lover back to the bed. “So gorgeous,” he murmured as Adam crawled over him. “Love you.”

“Mmmm, love you, too, angel,” Adam replied and started nibbling and sucking on Kris’ nipple. “This is going to be fucking awesome,” he said before taking the other one into his mouth.

“Such a tease,” Kris groaned, “turn around already.” He got a bite on his sensitive nub for his cheekiness, which made him moan even louder.

After a few more taunting nips, Adam gathered up two pillows and arranged them under Kris’ head.
“That should work,” he said and then straddled Kris backwards. “Legs up, angel.”

Kris spread his legs and drew his knees back as far as he could while watching Adam’s mouth-watering ass wriggle closer and closer to his face, pulse speeding up as he felt his lover’s ball sac and hot length slide up his chest. *Oh jesus.* He reached out and began to massage the rounded flesh, thumbs kneading apart two halves to reveal the destination of Kris’ impatient tongue. Hot breath on his own entrance made him gasp and he wondered how on earth he was going to concentrate on licking Adam while being licked at the same time. He needn’t have worried, however, because as soon as that firm, wet tongue touched his hole his immediate response was to bury his face in musky warmth.

Two tongues pushing, prodding and circling quivering rings of muscle, feather light flickers and thrusting insertions into each other’s body – so erotic and yet so intimate that Kris’ head was spinning as he lapped and groaned through an open mouth. Being on top meant that Adam had access to other things as well, and at one point he sucked in one of Kris’ balls and swirled his tongue around it before returning to the honey pot.

“Oh jesus.” He reached out and began to massage the rounded flesh, thumbs kneading apart two halves to reveal the destination of Kris’ impatient tongue. Hot breath on his own entrance made him gasp and he wondered how on earth he was going to concentrate on licking Adam while being licked at the same time. He needn’t have worried, however, because as soon as that firm, wet tongue touched his hole his immediate response was to bury his face in musky warmth.

“Shit,” he whimpered and wrapped his legs around Adam’s back. Kris swallowed heavily, feeling a bit dizzy and unsure how much more of this he could take, especially when every time his lover moved it stimulated his aching cock.

“You taste so good, angel… and I can still taste my cum from the first time…oh, ohhhhh yes, keep doing that…oh god…” Adam began to French kiss Kris’ hole feverishly when Kris spread him apart as wide as he could and licked delicate little circles right next to his entrance over and over again.

All of a sudden Adam bit him hard on the cheek and growled. “I need…I need…” Ignoring Kris’ yelp of pleasure and cries of protest, he rolled off and lay on his back, panting. “Please, come here… please…” Adam bent his knees and pulled on Kris’ arm. “Here, between my legs…I need to feel it.”

Kris caught his breath sharply. *No, he can’t mean…* Still reeling from the abrupt loss of Adam’s tongue, he crawled in between those muscled legs and rose to his knees. “What do you want, baby, my fingers?”

“No…I need, I want…” Adam reached down to grasp Kris’ length. “Just to feel it against me…just rub it there,” he said as he touched the head to his hole and trembled violently. “Fuck…please, angel…” he begged, squeezing his eyes shut, his chest like a bellows pump fanning an already raging fire.

“Oh jesus…Adam…” Kris licked his suddenly dry lips, thinking that this would be pure torture and wildly arousing at the same time. *Does this mean that I’ll eventually get to…shut.* He shook his head hard, needing to concentrate on the moment instead of his fantasies so he didn’t do anything stupid. With his dick in hand he slowly began to move the tip around Adam’s saliva wet entrance. *I can do this.* When he looked down and saw an image straight from his jerk off sessions, Kris whined low in his throat and began to stroke himself as he continued to draw circles of pleasure on his boyfriend’s puckered skin. “God…god…baby…s-so hot…” Beads of precum seeped from his slit and he used it like lube to slick the contact, desperately trying not to thrust his hips.

Adam was moaning loudly with his fists clenched into the bed sheets. “Kris…don’t stop…feels so good.” He hooked his arms behind his knees and pulled them back while craning his neck down to see. “Fuck…look at that.”

Staring intently and sipping air like water into a parched throat, Adam missed how much effort this
was costing Kris until he began to shake with strain. “I can’t…Adam…I can’t do this,” he panted as he reached his limit of restraint and scooted back about a foot.

“Sorry, I’m so sorry, lover…I didn’t think…this must be torture,” Adam said, looking stricken even through his dilated, lust filled eyes. “Let me help you.”

“No…stay there…don’t move.” Kris began to pump his length rapidly and his brain went into overdrive, telling him that he was fucking Adam into the bed. He threw his head back, grunting, groaning, and drowning in the blissful scene playing in his mind. “Yes…yes…Adam!”

“Fuck me, angel, so deep…so good, you hot, sexy man…give it to me…I want all of that hard cock in me right now,” Adam breathed, spurring Kris onto new heights of passion until he exploded and shouted his release.

Quaking from head to toe, he aimed and shot his load right onto Adam’s hole and was just about to lick it out when the wolf pounced. In a matter of seconds Kris was on his stomach again with Adam panting hot and heavy on the back of his neck.

“You…god, you make me so crazy,” he said gruffly, “I’m gonna drive you insane.”

A robin landed on the window sill outside the bedroom and looked like it was about to settle in for a good long rest, but it gave a little start and abruptly flew off when a loud shout came from inside. A hazardous wild child lay face down with hands bound to the bed by half of a tie, calling out in bliss as a breathtaking man with stars on his skin consumed him utterly.

***

The couple had decided that they would sleep in on Friday and skip the gym, so it was with many grumbles that Adam reached over at nine o’clock and fumbled for his phone on the nightstand. “Hello,” he rasped sleepily. “Oh! Hello Mrs. Stebbins!”

Still snuggled into his Adam blanket, Kris’ ears perked up when he heard the landlady’s name. I think that’s the one that has a tiny backyard outside…nice. Perfect for Fifi. He shifted and it made him wince a little, but he smiled happily, thinking about how hard Adam had worked him over the last night. Feels so incredible without a condom.

“Yes…that’s wonderful news! Uh huh, oh that’s perfectly fine, I can wait until it’s done. That sounds good. Yes, thank you very much.” He hung up and put the phone back on the table. “Kris!” Adam said excitedly, peering down at the bundle of man in his arms.

“I heard, baby, that’s so awesome…it’s the one with the yard, right?” He’s so cute like this.

“Yep, but I can’t move in until the twentieth because she has to do a few renovations first. I’ll have plenty of time to pack. Oh, and it has that small room that we…I mean…I can turn into a studio.” He bit his lip and frowned a little. “Angel…when--”

“Soon,” said Kris, “I’ll move in with you soon.”
“You keep saying that, but how long is soon? A week, a month, a year?”

Kris studied his lover’s hopeful, anxious face and wondered why he was still putting it off given how badly he wanted it, too. *Are we really ready for that? It hasn’t even been six months yet.* Something in his gut told him that they still needed a little more time and that he’d know when it was supposed to happen. “I don’t know…definitely not a year and probably not more than a month or so. Adam…” He wriggled out of his boyfriend’s embrace and sat up. “I’m not avoiding it, I promise.” It was obvious that Adam was trying not to pout. “Listen, to me,” he said as ran his hands through those thick black locks, “I want to do this the right way because I love you so much I don’t want to mess anything up by moving in before it feels right for me, okay? Just trust me on this.”

Adam gazed at him for a long time and it was hard to tell what he was thinking, but finally he smiled softly and drew Kris back into his arms. “I trust you, angel.”

Kris puffed out a breath and relaxed into the gentle caresses up and down his arm, glad that he had stood his ground yet again because it felt so empowering to speak his mind like that. He was about to fall back asleep when his foot touched smooth under the blankets. Curious, he used his toes to help bring it up and grinned when he saw what it was. “Hmm, we owe this tie so much,” he chuckled.

Adam kissed him on the temple and curled their hands together around the silky cloth. “Yes we do, lover. Just think, when you move in with me, both halves will be in the same place again,” he said in a drowsy voice.

“Reunited,” Kris added and yawned.

“Mhmm.”

They drifted off with limbs entwined.

**Chapter 44**

“Thank you, thank you very much! Now I usually don’t do this, but for my last song I’m going to let someone special make a request.” Adam looked at the man sitting at the table closest to the stage and smiled fondly.

“How about Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy by Queen?” Neil called out with a smirk.

Adam couldn’t help but laugh out loud at Neil’s choice. *He is so going to regret this.* “My younger brother everyone,” he said wryly, shaking his head and grinning at the laughter from the audience. “Well since it’s his last night in town…” Adam pointed to the piano player who nodded and began to plunk out the opening refrain. He noticed Kris beaming up at him and winked before starting to sing.

“I can dim the lights and sing you songs full of sad things
We can do the tango just for two
I can serenade and gently play on your heart strings
Be your valentino just for you”

He batteted his eyelashes and gestured dramatically at Neil, much to the amusement of the crowd.
“Ooh love - ooh loverboy
What're you doin' tonight, hey boy
Set my alarm, turn on my charm
That's because I'm a good old-fashioned lover boy”

He walked to the end of the stage and sang directly to that ridiculous man who had been such a support to him all these years.

“Ooh let me feel your heartbeat grow faster, faster
Ooh ooh can you feel my love heat
Come on and sit on my hot-seat of love”

The audience broke into loud guffaws and Adam snickered a little through the lyrics as Neil and Kris howled and banged on the table.

“And tell me how do you feel right after-all
I'd like for you and I to go romancing
Say the word - your wish is my command

When I'm not with you
I think of you always
I miss those long hot summer nights
I miss you
When I'm not with you
Think of me always
Love you - love you”

He continued to pour on the theatrics, swaying his hips comically and clutching at his heart in mock pain.

“Hey boy where do you get it from
Hey boy where did you go?
I learned my passion in the good old
Fashioned school of loverbooooysss”

He held the last note as long as he could with his hand stretched out to Neil who was beside himself with laughter. The crowd whistled and cheered loudly, still chuckling while Adam took his bows. “Thank you! Good night everyone and thanks for coming!” He hopped of the stage and joined Kris and Neil at their table. “You ass!” he joked, hitting his brother on the shoulder.

“That was so worth it,” Neil snorted so hard that he started coughing and Kris patted him on the back a few times.

After they settled down a bit, the three men ordered some drinks, just water for Adam, and enjoyed each other’s company. Neil sipped on a vodka tonic and talked about his new job. “I’m really excited about it and god knows this world needs more intelligent journalism. It just sucks that I have to get up at ass crack in the morning tomorrow to catch my flight.”

“Aww, poor baby,” Adam teased as he put his arm around Kris, who quickly threw back his rum and coke and ordered another.
“Excuse me,” said a young man approaching the able, “I just wanted to say that you are an amazing singer.” He smiled in a friendly way and stuck out his hand to Adam.

*It’s just a handshake, go on.* At his old club people had known better than to engage him and he wasn’t used to casual interactions like this with strange men. His left arm tightened around Kris, but he reached out with his right and briefly grasped the man’s hand. “Thank you,” he said, trying to be polite.

“Do you have an album out or anything?” the guy asked. “I’d definitely be interested.”

“I’m working on one,” Adam replied and loosened his grip on Kris’ shoulders. *Nothing to be worried about. Awkwardness is okay.* “I’m sure that once it’s done I’ll be selling copies here,” he said shortly but made eye contact with the man.

“Fantastic.” He complimented Adam once more and then moved away from the table.

*See, that was fine. You can do this.* It helped that he was with people he trusted and he hoped that he wouldn’t always need that kind of security blanket in order to socialize normally.

“Mmm, everyone loves you, baby,” said Kris after quickly downing the last of his drink, “but they can’t have you ‘cause you’re mine.” He had that open, wide smile and slightly too loud speech that said he was getting tipsy, plus he was very handsy, pawing at Adam and kissing him repeatedly on the cheek.

“You are adorable,” Adam chuckled, “and yes, I am all yours.”

Kris grinned and held his glass up. “One more!” he called out to a server walking by.

“Good thing you’re driving, bro,” said Neil, looking amused.

Thumping music started to blare over the speakers as the club staff pushed back tables to clear a large space in the center of the room. Kris licked his lips when his drink was brought to him, took two large swigs of it, and got up. “Let’s dance!” he exclaimed, waggling his hips around on slightly unsteady feet. “Wooops! Dangit, now it looks like I peed myself!”

Adam and Neil laughed at him and took the glass away so he wouldn’t spill anymore. “Are you kidding me?” snorted Adam. “You’ll step all over my toes like this. Come on, lover, let’s go home and we can dance there.” It felt nice to refer to ‘their’ home like that, even if it wasn’t really true yet. *It will be.*

“Awww, party pooper!” he pouted.

Adam dragged him outside into the night air and then turned to Neil. “Thanks for coming to see me even though you have to get up early tomorrow,” he said softly.

The brothers hugged hard and Adam heard Neil sniff. “Take care of yourself. We’ll find a way to visit and I’ll call…Blockhead,” Neil added and cleared his throat.

“Yeah, you too. Don’t let those New Yorkers mess with you, Lucy.” *Fuck, I’m really going to miss him.* They drew apart and smiled at each other.

“And you, Mister I can’t hold my liquor, you better be good to my brother or I’ll come back, haul
you off to my old high school and stuff you in a locker,” Neil threatened, mouth twitching as he tried not to laugh at Kris’ overly-serious face.

“Course,” he replied, shaking his head vigorously and realizing too late that this would make him stumble.

“Oh my god, you’re impossible,” said Adam, chortling as he caught Kris to keep him upright. “We’d better go. Call me next week, okay?” He tried not to give in to the sadness that was creeping up on him because he needed to get them back to the apartment.

“Will do, big brother.” They clasped hands for a long time, passing messages of reassurance through their eyes like a slow current of energy and then finally parted ways.

Thankfully Kris wasn’t actually drunk and was able to walk to the car on his own as long as he watched where he was going. When they finally got back to Adam’s, he ground some Columbian beans and started a small pot of coffee while Kris used the bathroom. *It’s okay to be sad about this… he’s always been there for you and he’s moving really far away.* He told himself to just go with the feelings and found that he could tolerate it without breaking down into tears, at least for the time being.

“How about a movie?” Adam suggested to Kris when he came into the kitchen.

“Thought we were gonna dance?” he grinned cheekily, but then spotted Adam’s less than happy face and frowned. “You sad ‘bout Neil?”

“Yeah, but it’s all right. Have a cup of this when it’s done brewing and come snuggle with me. We’ll watch *Y tu Mama Tambien.*” They changed into pajamas, drank their coffee and cuddled up on the couch. Kris was still energetic for a while and couldn’t get comfortable, but he gradually settled down and nestled into Adam’s arms. Adam stroked his lover’s hair soothingly as he sat with the sadness, feeling somehow that he was the one receiving comfort from the gentle caresses, Kris’ warm body a conductor of some sort sending the tenderness right back to him.

About half way through the flick the alcohol wore off and Kris was sober again. He gazed up at Adam and smiled warmly. “Hi.”

Adam turned off the TV and set the remote down. “Hey there,” he said quietly, looking down at his wild child rabbit with affection. He bent his head and cupped Kris’ jaw, lifting it up so he could reach that beautiful mouth with his own. Tiny smacks and clicks of lips echoed in the otherwise silent room for several minutes until Adam finally stood up and led Kris into the bedroom.

***

“Banana pancakes…you are a genius.” Kris came up behind Adam who was pouring batter from a small pitcher onto an electric griddle and snaked his arms around him, nuzzling his neck and inhaling deeply.

“You’re sniffing me again,” Adam chuckled as he adjusted the temperature dial.

“Mmmh, it’s because you smell so good.”
“Liar. It’s ten o’clock and I haven’t showered since yesterday morning. I’m sure that I reek,” he said, “but I love you for saying that.” Little bubbles began to appear around the edges of the pancakes. Adam flipped them over and then turned his head back to catch Kris’ lips in a brief kiss.

“Oh my god though, those smell even better than you do,” Kris said rapturously and inched his hands down Adam’s stomach and then further, as if the aroma were an aphrodisiac.

“Hey now, none of that or I’ll burn them,” Adam giggled, trying to ignore the way his body was responding to his boyfriend’s touch. Kris gasped dramatically and backed away at once, making Adam sigh at the loss of warmth and stimulation even though he’d been the one to stop it. “So are you staying to keep me company while I make snacks for the Super Bowl party?” he asked as he scooped the pancakes up with a spatula and slid them onto two plates.

“Well, I thought about it, but I really need to go home and work on my demo or it’ll never get done. The game doesn’t start until six o’clock anyway.” Kris sat down at the table and rubbed his hands together eagerly when Adam set down the plates.

Maybe Ali will come over. He really didn’t feel like being alone today for some reason. “No problem,” he smiled. “Well dig in, angel.” They began to eat and Adam had to laugh a little at the boyish glee on Kris’ face and the way he savored every bite. “They did turn out pretty good if I do say so mys—” Someone was knocking on Adam’s door. That’s weird. “Huh. Be right back, and don’t eat my pancakes!” he teased.

Still clad in the t-shirt and pajama bottoms he’d thrown on this morning, Adam padded out to the living room and looked through the peephole on his door. Motherfucker! What the fuck is he doing here? He quickly unbolted the lock and yanked open the door, a storm of fury already twisting his features. “What the fuck do you want?” he growled at Brian, unable to control his immediate reaction to seeing the man who’d blatantly come on to his lover and completely forgetting his previous vow to be okay with all of this.

“I…I…” Brian shrank back and looked like he was about to piss his pants, but then he took a deep breath and plowed on. “I…wanted to apologize and ask you if…” Seething, his eyes cast of steel, Adam stood there waiting to hear what this punk could possibly want to know. This better be fucking good!

“That’s better be fucking good!” Adam raged as the veins in his neck pulsed visibly. If steam could come out of his ears it would have at that moment. He was so irate that his body was shaking and he felt close actually punching the kid. Unbe-fuckin-leivable! The fucker has a death wish!
Brian went ghostly white and he backed up a few paces into the hallway.

“Adam, calm down, you’re scaring the crap out of him,” Kris said calmly and placed a hand on his arm, but Adam shook it off.

“I will not fucking calm down! He has the nerve to come here and…and…”

Kris squared his shoulders, thrust out his jaw and stepped around Adam. “What do you want, Brian?”

The young man swallowed nervously but was unable to hide the naked want as he gazed at Kris. “I asked him if he’d let you mentor me again,” he said in an attempt at a steady voice.

“What? Why would you do that? He doesn’t make decisions for me,” Kris said firmly.

Adam took Kris by the shoulders and turned him around. “There is no way in hell…did you see what he just did!” The kid is fucking dangerous!

“Yes, I saw and so what?”

“He’s harmless. We went over this before, remember? You think something’s going to happen just because he looked at me like that?”

But he wasn’t listening; his wrath had thrown his rational brain straight out the window. “You are not going to mentor him again and that’s final!” he shouted.

“You can’t tell me what to do, Adam!” Kris yelled back. He rolled his shoulders and faced the man in the hall. “Go home. I will call you at some point, but please leave now.”

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“You’ll call me?” Brian asked hopefully and when Kris nodded he actually had the audacity to look a little smug before he bolted down the stairs. As soon as he was gone Kris closed the door and met the huffing bull that was Adam. “What is going on with you?” he asked him angrily. “What gives you the right to order me around? Why are you so mad about this anyway?”

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“Because! I just am, okay?” He stomped down the hall and into his bedroom, tearing off his shirt as he went. Adam didn’t know why he was behaving as if Kris and Brian had slept together, didn’t understand the chaotic maelstrom crashing through his body, but it didn’t matter at the moment. “I’m going for a walk!” he yelled out as he changed into a pair of jeans, a different shirt and his sneakers. He would have gone to the gym but he didn’t trust himself to drive safely like this. When he came back out, Kris was still standing by the door looking shocked and upset. “You can stay here if you want. I’ll be back in an hour,” Adam said through clenched jaws. He grabbed his wallet and keys and then left without another word.

*What the hell…what the fucking hell!* Every step down the sidewalk felt like it would punch giant holes right through the concrete. He didn’t even know where he was going; he just walked and walked, fuming and grinding his teeth together in frustration and anger. Brian’s openly desirous eyes and arrogant face would not get out of his head and it was driving him mad. *But why?* Something about the kid was triggering all of Adam’s alarm bells but there was no way he was going to figure it out until he could think clearly. He began to run, needing to vent the anger and mere walking wasn’t
cutting it. Feet pounding the pavement like sledgehammers, he took off in no particular direction and ran flat out, zipping past strangers and eventually taking to the road so he could avoid running into people. Since he was not an Olympic athlete, he had no choice but to slow down after about a half a mile, but it was working. Gradually the red haze of fury that was clouding his brain began to dissipate; he stopped trying to punish the cement beneath his feet and jogged at a steady pace.

What is it about him? Even though Brian had obviously been scared of Adam, it hadn’t stopped him from brazenly declaring his intentions towards Kris. Brian, his cousin, a kid he’d known all his life and had never had a problem with. It doesn’t make sense…why is he behaving this way? Sure Kris was gorgeous, anyone could see that, but only a fool would persist the way Brian had after the first misstep. Despite this, Adam understood that he wasn’t a threat even though he’d been so forward, which came back to the question of why – why he was getting under Adam’s skin? It was almost like Brian reminded him of someone to be wary of, a person determined to get what they wanted. Oh my god. He skidded to a halt as the realization crashed down on him like a ton of bricks, each one clunking painfully on his skull with the awful truth. It’s me…he reminds me of…me. Holy fuck! Adam was so stunned that he stumbled to the curb and sat down hard. Whoa…whoa. As difficult as it was to absorb, there was no denying that Brian was behaving very much like Adam used when he saw a man he wanted, especially when he was first starting out. He recalled all too clearly how he had been…scared and confused at first but resolute nonetheless in his need to have the man. Shit…no wonder he seems dangerous…I almost always got what I wanted! There was no knowing the cause for his cousin’s actions and this may even have been an isolated incident particular to Kris, but he recognized the potential for Brian to get himself into a shit load of trouble if he didn’t knock it off. And I don’t want him to be like I was. With this thought another test presented itself and two voices immediately struck up a battle in Adam’s mind, one saying that it was because he was a ‘damaged freak,’ and the other trying to assert that it was because it was simply unhealthy to function that way. Fuck! This is all so fucking hard! His head was pounding and he shook it as if this would make the two sides play nice and leave him alone. It’s not healthy! he yelled loudly at himself until they quieted down. He sighed and kicked at a pebble near his foot. Kris was right. Brian is confused, but way more than he or Kris realize. Something was making his cousin risk bodily harm to get his way and there was only one solution that Adam could come up with to help the situation. I’m going to have to be his mentor…damn…damn.

His butt was starting to hurt from sitting on the curb and he got up and started walking again, feeling significantly less angry but wondering if Brian would even agree to being mentored by him. On this side of his revelation, it was easier to have sympathy for his cousin and he found that he genuinely wanted to help the kid. This is how Kris must have felt, too. His feet began to beat a familiar path and before he knew it, he was standing in front of the pet store. Without hesitating he went inside and walked directly to the dog pens.

“Hi, Adam,” said the young employee, Jen, who had come to know him over weeks. “Same as usual?”

He nodded warily at her and went to wait in the play area. Fifi had been in the middle of a nap and when the girl brought her in, she wobbled sleepily over to Adam and curled up at once in his lap. “Hey girl,” he whispered as he pet her gently. He was experiencing something akin to the calm after a storm, when everything looks clear and bright but scrubbed raw from the force of the tempest. “Wish my mom had known about you when I was little.” He remembered begging her for weeks to get a dog because his friend Caleb had one, but since she was allergic it never happened, and gradually Adam had discovered that he didn’t like hairy things that much after all.
“You know,” said Jen, “someone came in today and seemed very interested in buying her.”

Adam whipped his head up and stared at Jen. No! Fifi’s has to come live with me! “But…did you sell her?”

“Not yet, but it’s going to happen sooner or later,” she said in a kind voice.

“I’m going to buy her, but I can’t until I move into my new apartment on the twentieth. They don’t allow dogs at the place I’m in now. Can’t you, you know, hold her for me or something?” he asked worriedly. He knew he could probably find another hairless dog, but he wanted Fifi. She’s special.

Jen looked at him sympathetically and sighed. “I wish I could, but we’re not allowed to do that. I’d get fired for sure.”

“But what if I buy her now and she just stays here until I can bring her home? Can you do that?”

“I’m so sorry, Adam, but we can only hold purchased animals for two days,” she said sadly.

I can’t lose her! He’d grown very attached to the little dog over time and it tore at his heart to think of her not living with him and Kris. Suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to him and he almost jumped up from the floor in excitement. Fifi woke up at his movement and looked around blearily. “How about if I buy her today and I can keep her at my parent’s house?” And it’ll be fine for mom because Fifi has no hair!

Jen nodded and smiled at him, saying that it was a wonderful idea, but that he had to come get her within two days.

“You hear that girl?” he chirruped animatedly at his new dog, “you’re going to come live with me!”

Adam paid with his credit card and hugged Fifi one last time before leaving the store, assuring her that he’d come back for her tomorrow and giggling when she licked his ear. Maybe I should let her stay with my folks until Kris moves in…yeah, that feels right somehow. I can always visit her there.

As he walked home, Adam thought about Kris and wondered if he was still at the apartment. God, I was so awful to him! He hoped that his boyfriend was there so that he could apologize and explain. It came as no surprise when a voice poked his brain insistently and said that Kris had left him because of this. Shut up, I’m not listening to you! But it was a struggle not to, and he couldn’t wait for the day when that voice was silenced forever.

“Hello? Angel?” Adam closed the door behind him and looked around, but the living room was empty. He frowned and started to worry that Kris had been so angry with him that he’d gone home, but just then he saw his man walking in from the hallway. Yikes, he does not look happy. “Kris, I’m so so sorry,” he said immediately as he approached his lover.

Kris had his arms folded, however and did not open them when Adam tried to embrace him. He sat down on the couch without a word and motioned for Adam to do the same. Fuck, he’s really pissed. It scared him to see that beautiful face so stone-like, but he screwed up his courage and sat down. Kris turned to face him and crossed his legs Indian style and Adam copied him.

“You want to tell me what the hell that was all about, Adam?”

“Yes, god, baby I’m so sorry I yelled at you like that. I had no right to tell you what to do,” he said sincerely.
Kris nodded but just waited for Adam to continue.

*It’s okay, it’s going to be okay, just tell him what you figured out.* Nervously picking at his nail polish, he launched into the tale, explaining what he’d discovered and why he’d been so angry. As he spoke, Kris’ face lost its severe expression and became increasingly amazed.

“You think he’s like you?” he asked, eyes widened in wonder instead of narrowed in anger.

Adam’s heart rate slowed down when he saw the transformation and he felt relief settle over him like, “I don’t know…maybe, maybe not, but I recognize what he’s doing and it’s so similar to what I used to do. In any case, I think it’s best if I mentor him because I think I can help him better…no offense.”

“None taken!” said Kris emphatically. “Wow, I never even thought…never considered… I didn’t tell you this before, but he wanted to get me alone in my bedroom that one day.”

Adam had to quickly stamp down the anger that arose with those words because it wouldn’t help. “You were right, Kris, he’s confused but about more than just his sexual identity. Something else is going on there I just know it. I hope he’ll let me help him.”

Finally Kris relaxed his arms and reached out to Adam. “Apology accepted, but don’t expect me to be happy if you ever try to tell me what to do like that again,” he said as he grasped Adam’s hands.

“I won’t. You had every right to be mad at me,” he replied, grateful for the physical contact and warmth in Kris’ hands. “You should be proud of yourself, actually.” he smiled.

Kris returned the smile and leaned forward to kiss Adam gently on the lips. “I am,” he murmured.

They decided that the best place for make up sex was the shower seeing as neither of them had taken one yet. For a long time they just kissed and lathered each other’s naked bodies as the hot water sprayed down over them, both seeming to need the simple tenderness of the act after such intense emotions had passed between them. But after a while they could not ignore their desire for one another, and Adam gave his lover a downright fantastic blowjob before fingerling him open and sliding into him with soapy slickness.

***

Adam didn’t have that much time to prepare snacks after Kris went home to work on his music, but with Alisan’s help he knew they’d be done in time. Since he always told her everything, it wasn’t long before he began to talk about what had happened that morning. She was a good listener and when he was finished with his story, she put down the potato she’d been washing and hugged him fiercely.

“I’m so damn proud of you,” she said and began to snuffle.

“Aww, don’t cry, Ali,” Adam crooned as he squeezed her tight.

“I can’t help it. All these years I’ve watched you struggle and now…now…” She hiccupped a few
times and then her body started to shake with little sobs.

So amazing...I’m so lucky to have her. “It’s all right...it’s okay.” He let her cry on his shoulder and did his best to soothe her the way she’d done for him so many times.

After a few minutes she drew back and gave him a watery smile. Adam kissed her cheek and wiped the wetness from under her eyes. “Love you, chica.”

“Me too, puppy.”

They continued to work and eventually started talking about their dinner with Matt a few days ago. Adam related that although it hadn’t been exactly comfortable, it had gone better than expected and he thought that Matt was a nice guy.

“I think so, too,” said Alisan, “and he’s so funny!”

“Hmmm. I saw you two making eyes at each other,” Adam said with a smirk.

“Yeah, so what about it?” she replied in a challenging tone, eyebrow quirked up at him as if daring him to question her behavior.

“Nothing! Nothing at all,” he chuckled and held up his hands in mock defense, “Matt just better watch out, that’s all.”

“Hmph.”

At 5:30 they loaded all the food into Adam’s car and headed over to Kris’ apartment. When they arrived, Matt answered the door enthusiastically and immediately helped Alisan with all the things she was carrying. Adam snorted and followed them into the kitchen. “Where’s Kris?”

“Bedroom,” replied Matt, “working on his songs I think. Good to see you again, man,” he said with a friendly smile.

He really is an okay guy. “Yeah, you too.” But Adam didn’t know what to do or say after that, so he just started fussing with the platters of snacks feeling a bit awkward without Kris there.

“Why don’t you go find your man,” suggested Alisan, “Matt and I can set up the living room,” she said and chuckled when Kris’ roommate nodded vigorously.

No complaints here. He knocked on the bedroom door and was greeted with a beaming smile plastered on his lover’s face. Kris pulled him inside, closed the door and launched into his arms at once. Adam sighed in contentment and rocked them a little as they cuddled standing up. Yeah.

***

“Dude, you make an incredible spread!” Matt exclaimed when all the food was set up on the coffee table and everyone was congregated in the living room. “You didn’t have to go through so much trouble.”
“It’s no trouble,” Adam smiled at him, “cooking is kind of my thing…along with singing that is.”

It seemed that everyone wanted to sit on the couch, but since there wasn’t enough room and Adam and Kris were an actual couple, they won out while Alisan and Matt took the armchairs on either side. *Like I’d get through an entire football game without sitting next to Kris.*

“So exciting!” Kris chirped and rubbed his hands together as they all watched the opening ceremonies of the game. “The Colts are going to kick ass!”

“Oh come on,” Alisan said, “don’t you think that the Saints deserve to win? I mean, after everything that happened to New Orleans with hurricane Katrina…plus the Colts have already been to the Super Bowl.”

Kris was about to respond but Matt beat him to it. “I get that, really, but the winner should be determined by who’s the better team, that’s football, and the Colts are better hands down.”

Alisan looked to Kris for support, but he agreed with Matt. “Sorry Ali, but I think you’re going to be disappointed.”

She tried Adam next, but he had no idea who he should be rooting for. “Umm…”

“The Saints quarterback is cuter,” she said, trying to persuade him. Adam had learned from Kris that a quarterback is the lead guy who gets the football to his teammates who then try to run it as far as they can down the field in an attempt to score across the goal line.

*Cute plus a touching story…yup.* “Alright, I’m with you,” he told her. She whooped in approval and they all chuckled at her. Adam thought it was rather endearing the way everyone was on the edge of their seats when the game was seconds from starting. The Saints had the ball first and Adam knew he might have to rely on Alisan to help him know when to cheer and when to get up and yell at the TV in righteous indignation.

“Haha!” shouted Kris and Matt together, “three and out!”

“That means that it’s the Colts turn because our team couldn’t score,” said Alisan when Adam looked questioningly at her. “But don’t worry, we’ll get ‘em in the end,” she said passionately with a glance toward Matt, who smiled at her despite the fact he was rooting against her team.

“I’m not worried.” He could care less who actually won, but it was fun to watch the rest of them get so worked up, especially Kris. Already he could feel the heat of his boyfriend’s enthusiasm and hoped that the first half went quickly so they could get on with the sex part.

“See that? Payton always finds his man,” Kris said when the Indianapolis Colts’ quarterback Payton Manning threw a spectacularly accurate pass. He beamed at Adam and kissed him on the lips before returning to the game.

*Hot.*

“Defense! Defense!” yelled Alisan on her feet when the Colts were close to scoring. “Hold them back!…Aha!” she said triumphantly after a little while. “Now they have to try for a field goal,” she told Adam, “and that’s only three points instead of seven.”

“Better than nothing,” said Matt from across the room, “and those points are important…they could
make or break the game.” Adam and Kris watched in amusement as their two best friends waged a silent battle with their eyes. When it was clear that neither of them were going to give in, Alisan considered Matt with even more appreciation than before and the corner of her mouth turned up as she went back to watching.

Kris had told Adam that the commercials during the Super Bowl were usually great because about 90 million people watch the game and 30 seconds of advertising could cost up to 3 million dollars, which was ludicrous in Adam’s opinion. The only good one he’d seen so far, however, was a Snickers commercial where a guy with little energy is said to be ‘playing football like Betty White,’ with the 88-year-old actress in scene, supposedly as the man, being tackled to the ground in the mud. “Oh my god,” he laughed heartily with everyone else, “that just looks so wrong! Poor Betty! If that were my Nana, she’d kick all of their asses!”

There were fifteen minutes to each quarter of the game, and right near the end of the first one, the Colts scored a touchdown taking the score to 10 - 0 and Kris and Matt leapt to their feet in celebration. “Woohooo! Take that! Oh yeah, oh yeah,” Kris chanted as he and Matt gave each other high fives and Alisan pouted, but Adam caught her peeking when Matt’s shirt rode up a little in the back. She almost never blushed, however, and just winked at Adam and waggled her eyebrows.

“Whoa! That guy totally pushed our guy!” Adam called out when a Colt was too aggressive to an out of bounds Saint. “He’s not supposed to do that, is he?”

“Unnecessary roughness!” Alisan crowed, “fifteen yard penalty!”

Kris frowned but then leaned over and whispered in Adam’s ear. “I’d like some very necessary roughness from you right about now…too bad we’ll have to wait,” he said huskily and nipped him on the earlobe.

Adam shivered and felt his pants grow tighter. *Fuck.* “So how come fifteen minutes takes so long to play,” he asked, trying to figure out why time was creeping towards halftime like a tortoise on crutches.

“Time outs, commercials…stuff like that,” said Matt as he picked up a potato skin and took a bite. “Man, these are better than I’ve had in a restaurant!”

Adam grinned and felt good about how things were going so far with him. “Thank you. Should’ve seen when I first tried to make them. I think I was twelve and I didn’t know you had to poke holes in potatoes before putting them in a microwave,” he chuckled, marveling at the fact that he’d just shared a childhood story with a relative stranger. *How about that?* “I use an oven now, obviously, and you can probably still see how many holes I jabbed into those suckers,” he said amidst snorts of laughter from the others.

After a Saints field goal early in the second quarter, neither team scored again for almost the rest of the period, but it was a tense game, and all four of them were on their feet at one point when the Saints were close to scoring, but the runner slipped and got tackled on their last chance to cross the goal line. “Noo! Crap!” Adam found himself shouting along with Alisan, “we were sooo close! I bet that guy tripped our guy on purpose!” Kris stopped celebrating and looked at Adam with such feral hunger that he was sure they were about to ditch the game completely and tear each other apart. They stood there breathing heavily and staring at one another until someone gave a pointed cough. Kris shook his head and they sat down about a foot apart, not trusting themselves to sit any closer at the moment with going at it like animals.
Finally only a few minutes remained in the half and the Saints were desperately attempting to score again so they could tie up the game before the break. “Yes!” cried Alisan when they scored another three points with mere seconds left on the clock. She punched the air and flipped her hair overdramatically at Matt, who raised his eyebrows at her a bit suggestively.

Adam laughed as he clapped. “Wooo! Go Saints!” It was fun even though they hadn’t managed an actual touchdown. “Oh shit!” He’d just realized that no time on the clock meant halftime and he turned to find Kris already headed towards him with smoldering heat in his eyes. *Finally!*

Kris grabbed his hand and pulled him so quickly into the hallway that Adam barely had time to yell at the other two that they might want to turn the TV up really loud. For once, he could feel a taste of that adrenaline Kris experienced from watching an exciting competition and it only heightened his need.

It was hard to tell who was more turned on when they reached the bedroom and they battled for dominance, kissing fiercely and taking turns pinning each other against the wall, scrabbling at clothing as the television blared in the background with commentator voices.

“Fucking…pants…” Adam growled, biting and sucking on his boyfriend’s neck as he tried to undo the wild child’s button with fumbling fingers.

Kris wasn’t helping because he already had one leg around Adam’s hips and was thrusting into him repeatedly. “Adam…Adam…” he groaned and then as if he couldn’t possibly wait another minute, he pushed Adam’s hands away and tried to tackle him to the ground. He wasn’t successful, however, because the tall man wasn’t giving in that easily, and they ended up in a sort of wrestling match on the floor, rolling around kissing, licking and humping each other still fully clothed. At one point Adam managed to hold Kris down long enough to get his shirt off and bit him on the nipple.

“Fuck! Oh god,” Kris moaned as he bucked up into Adam, but then he used his powerful legs and flipped them over. Adam grinned wickedly and slapped him hard on the ass, which caught him off guard and gave Adam the opportunity he needed to turn the tables yet again. On and on it went until they were both finally naked, having torn each other’s clothes off with a few rips here and there. Loud music was come from the living room but neither cared or paid attention as they tussled, hard lengths rubbing, fingers digging into hips, sweat beading and dripping on each other only to be licked off, muscles straining and breath coming in harsh gasps.

It was like a Greco-Roman wrestling match except everyone in the audience would have been too busy masturbating to cheer for their man. At long last Adam won by slamming all of his weight on top of Kris and using his long arms and legs to splay them like two starfish. Neither could speak through their labored breathing, but their eyes sizzled and crackled with pornographic electricity. A drop of sweat dripped from Adam’s hair onto Kris’ forehead and he licked it off, which set off a whole series of licks and he began to tongue bathe his scorching hot lover from head to toe.

Kris gave up control and let his body be ravished, moaning and writhing as Adam replaced all the perspiration with saliva, licking his straining dick, his stomach, chest and arms and even lapping at Kris’ face before turning him over to wash the other side.

“Shit…shit…” Kris wheezed into the carpet as his ass cheeks grew wetter and wetter with spit. “Fuck me…do it now, you beast…god!” he cried out when Adam spanked him. “Please!”
With that, Adam grunted, planted his knees in between Kris’ legs and shoved them apart as wide as they’d go. “Fuck,” he growled, “no lube.”

“I don’t care…just do it! No fingers…I want your cock…now!” he begged, his entire body quivering, waiting to be claimed and devoured by the hungry wolf.

Adam felt like an animal, dizzy with adrenaline and need, a beast that had been taunted with a juicy raw steak for days and was finally allowed to tear into it. He leaned down and chomped on Kris’ round flesh before pulling it apart and diving in with every ounce of energy he could muster.

Kris cried out loudly and tried to find something to hang onto, his fingers scratching at the short carpet as Adam pulled out plunged in again. “Fucking…tight…goddamnit…” Firm pressure squeezed the entire length of his rock hard member and it felt so damn good that every living thing endowed with a dick would be jealous if it knew.

“Adam, oh my god,” Kris whined, lifted his ass in the air and gasped at the new angle. “Yes…shit…right there!” He shoved his hand under his body and tried to pump his cock the best that he could.

Guttural sounds erupted from low in Adam’s throat with every thrust and he knew he wouldn’t last long with that tight ass gripping his cock so hard. All of his instincts were demanding that he speed up and fill the body beneath him with hot cum. Balls slapping loudly against Kris’ skin, he used his flexible hips to work his dick so deep inside that every nerve seemed to shudder with pleasure.

Gasping and panting, Kris let go of his cock and reached back with both hands to pull Adam into his hole. “Come…come…want it…give it to me…fuck me!”

“Kris! God, you…fucking animal! Yes…oh jesus!…oh…OH!” Adam dropped onto his lover’s back and threw everything he had into the final thrusts as the release he sought began to rocket up from his core. “FUCK!” His voice mixed with Kris’ shout of pleasure and their bodies gave out at last, completing the sensual, testosterone infused battle for prowess that had started with a field goal.

A sheen of sweat coated each spent man and they lay like the dead as their skin gradually cooled and breathing returned to normal. A raspy voice was singing the last notes of an old song in the background and Adam began to chuckle softly. “I can’t believe that The Who still performs. Aren’t they like sixty years old now?”

Kris tried to laugh but it came out as a wheeze. “You are the fucking hottest man to ever walk this earth,” he said hoarsely.

“Right back at you, angel,” Adam responded and turned his head to lick his boyfriend’s cheek. “Mmm, salty.” When he rolled off and Kris sat up, Adam saw rug burns all over them both. “Battle wounds,” he winked, surprised that he didn’t mind being marked up like that.

“Oh man,” Kris said with a giggle, “look at my room!”

In addition to the pool of Kris’ cum seeping into the carpet, his desk chair was turned on its side, a basket of laundry had been knocked over and the clothes and shoes they’d been wearing were strewn everywhere.

_Fucking awesome._

It took them a while to clean up before they returned to the living room and they barely made the
start of the second half.

“Holy shit!” Matt and Alisan gaped at the two men with hazy, fucked out eyes, tousled hair and red marks on their skin. “What the hell happened in there? A war?” asked Matt with eyes like an owl.

Adam and Kris flopped onto the couch and snuggled up together. “In a manner of speaking,” said Kris, winking at his roommate.

“Damn!” Alisan exclaimed, “I want sex like that!” Her head turned just a tad in Matt’s direction, but only Adam noticed it.

*Such a feisty girl.* He quirked an eyebrow at her as the game started up again. “So, what did you guys do out here all by yourselves?” he asked suspiciously.

“Dirty mind,” Alisan smirked, “we talked is all, right Matt?”

“Absolutely, but we had to go outside because we couldn’t hear ourselves over the TV,” he chuckled.

“Oh my god! Look at that!” Kris shot up from the couch as the Saints scored an impressive touchdown in the first minute of the half, the first of several more that followed during the rest of the game. Alisan and Adam whooped and hollered while the others groaned in disappointment.

Shortly before the end of the Super Bowl, a commercial came on that sparked an interesting conversation. It was Audi car ad and had the “green police” driving around and ticketing people for wasting energy, not recycling, etcetera. “You know, it’s not that simple,” said Matt.

“What do you mean?” Alisan asked him.

“Well, people have to really care. I don’t think that adding more laws and rules is going to do it.”

“Hmmm,” Adam said, looking at Matt in a different light. *Not just a jokester after all.* He was about to add to the conversation when the Saints defense came through and stopped the Colts from scoring and everyone jumped to their feet. The clock ran out and the Saints pulled off a huge upset, winning the game 31-17 over the favorites.

“Hahaaaa!!!” Alisan hopped up and down and shook her ass. “Neener neener neeeenerrrr,” she taunted childishly at the two boys pouting.

Adam laughed at her and clapped loudly, enjoying the fun of camaraderie in a way he hadn’t since before his trauma. *I like this. I can do this.*

After it was all over they hung out in the living room munching on what was left of the snacks and picked up the conversation that Matt had begun.

“So how do think that people are going to care?” Alisan asked him. “I mean if the social norm is to live green, then people won’t have a choice, will they?”

“Yes they would,” Adam put in, “they could ignore the rules and then the government would have to waste time and money ‘policing green’ just like that commercial. But if people actually cared…”

“That’s an interesting point,” added Kris, “but like Ali said, how do you get people to do that?”
The four of them discussed the topic for over an hour, each one contributing their own ideas, sometimes agreeing and sometimes not. But the important part at the end of the day was that they all felt a little closer to each other by the time Adam and Alisan were packing up and getting ready to leave.

_That was cool. I really like Matt._ Adam found him to be not only friendly and open, but also intelligent and easy to talk to. As he gathered up the last of the platters from the living room, he saw Kris watching him a little sadly. “What’s wrong, angel?” he asked him.

“I wish you didn’t have to leave,” Kris said with a bit of frown.

Adam put down the dishes and walked over to his boyfriend who was leaning against the refrigerator. “I don’t. Well, I do have to give Ali a ride home, but I could come back here if you want.”

“I could give her one,” Matt piped up eagerly.

“You totally could,” said Alisan. She sauntered up to him and ran her finger under his chin. “Totally.”

Matt shivered and licked his lips. “See ya!” He took her by the hand and they left rather quickly.

Adam and Kris chuckled and then suddenly found themselves in an empty apartment, but oddly enough, all the couple wanted to do was cuddle up in Kris’ little bed and smooch. “I had an awesome time today,” Adam said after a few kisses.

“I’m so glad, baby. I hope that we can all hang out some more.”

“I’d like that. Hey, did you remember to take next Monday off?” Adam had planned a surprise getaway for Valentine’s Day and they wouldn’t be back until Monday night.

“Mnhm. Can’t wait. You’re going to have to tell me what to pack, though.” He traced his fingers up and down Adam’s chest and kissed him softly on the lips, which turned into a lengthy yet tender exchange.

“Love you so much,” Adam murmured after they returned to snuggling. He sighed and ran his fingers through Kris’ hair. “Just what you’d normally pack for a weekend, nothing special.”

“Sounds intriguing.”

“I guarantee only good times, angel,” he said, remembering about Kris’ previous experiences with this holiday. They locked eyes for a moment and finally Kris smiled and nodded. “Promise,” said Adam and wrapped his lover up with his body as if this would protect him from bad memories.
Thump, thump, thump. Adam’s heart was beating too fast but he was used to it by now. *Just one more minute.* The sound of crashing waves that were soothing to most people made all his muscles tighten up painfully, but it was significantly better than when he’d first started this exercise weeks ago. He’d suffered through some truly awful flashbacks in the beginning, but now he could get through ten whole minutes without having one at all. *Breathe in...breathe out, in...out...* The alarm went off on the little timer he’d bought specifically for this purpose and he pressed stop on the CD remote at once. *I did it.* He removed the cool, damp cloth from his forehead and felt his body relax into the couch. Feeling a little drained, he was about to lie down and rest when his phone dinged with a text message. Adam picked it up from the coffee table and beamed when he saw the words: “on my way. meet u there. ily.”

“Yes!” he chirped out loud, all energy restored like wind up toy that was primed and ready to go. Kris was coming from work so it would take him a bit longer to get there, but Adam was too eager to wait. He threw on some socks, shoes and a light jacket since it was chilly out that night and left the apartment. For a cool Monday evening the streets were remarkably crowded, but Adam was too happy to care that he had to weave in and out of people to get to his destination. As he walked, he thanked the universe that Kris’ professor had canceled his class tonight so that they could do this together.

***

Earlier that day, Kris was impatiently waiting for his lunch break so that he could talk with Matt and try to get the details on what had happened with him and Alisan after the Super Bowl. He usually wasn’t one to pry, but he couldn’t contain his curiosity after they had practically run out of the apartment last night. *And he wasn’t even home when Adam left early this morning!* When twelve-thirty rolled around, he went over to the shoe department, grabbed his roommate by the elbow and marched him into the staff room.

Matt seemed to know at once what was on Kris’ mind. “Nothing doing, man. A gentleman never--”

“Pssht…so you’re a gentleman now are you? Oh come on! How many times have you pestered me for details?”

Matt chuckled and started pulling out the leftovers of Adam’s party snacks from the fridge. He tossed Kris a tupperware full of wings and sat down with two more containers. “Well I’ll tell you this much,” he began as he pulled the lid off of one and took out a stack of cold quesadillas, “she is one feisty chick.” He winked and took a large bite of a wedge. “Damn! These are still good the next day. I tell you, Adam really knows his stuff!”

“You’re avoiding the subject,” Kris smirked at him. He tore into a barbequed chicken leg with relish and pinned Matt with an intense yet playful stare as he chewed.

After inhaling several more quesadillas, Matt wiped his mouth and adopted a rather serious expression. “Actually, I really like her a lot and...I really want things to work out.” He blushed and looked down at the table, which almost made Kris choke on his food because in all the time he’d known him, Matt had never spoken like that about a girl before. “I mean, don’t get me wrong, she was totally all over me,” he said with a bit of his former bravado, “but I...erm...”
“Well I’ll be damned!” Kris exclaimed, “you’re a gentleman after all!” How about that? Maybe he’ll actually have a real relationship for once instead of playing cat and mouse all the time.

Matt smiled genuinely and Kris was reminded of a picture of him as a young boy he’d seen in Matt’s room on the wall. “I spent the night on her couch, but damn is she a good kisser,” he shuddered. “Anyway, we’re going out this weekend. Ali wants to take me to a place called the Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery…apparently she’s really into gardening or something? She started talking about little trees…”

“Oh my god,” Kris began to laugh hysterically, “this is going to be so much fun!”

***

Kris got out of work at four o’clock and fired off a text to Adam saying that he was on his way. He was thrilled that his professor had canceled because he just couldn’t bear the thought of missing out on what was sure to be incredibly fun, not to mention sweet and heartwarming. As usual, parking was near impossible but after ten minutes he managed to squeeze into a tiny spot only a half a block from the store.

Keys jangling in his pocket, he made his way down the road and into the pet shop. I’m sure he’s already here. He walked over to the dog section and there was Fifi, growling at a squeaky toy in her cage, which was sporting a ‘SOLD’ sign. The sight of it made Kris giggle a bit and he looked around for Adam but didn’t see him.

“Checking out the dog food,” said Jen with a big smile when she saw Kris. “Aisle three.”

He thanked her and walked across the store until he found the right lane. “Oh my god, Adam!” he laughed as he saw his lover staggering under the weight of an enormous bag of puppy chow that he was trying to heft onto his shoulder. “She’s only a tiny dog!”

Adam poked his head around the bag and beamed at Kris. “Hi angel! Well I don’t know how long she’ll be with my parents and I don’t want them to have to buy her food. Do you think this will be enough?”

He is too cute to be real. “Yes,” Kris chuckled, “I’m sure it’ll be fine. Let me help you.” He jogged off and returned with a cart for the bag that was almost as big as he was.

“Phew! Thanks!” Adam rubbed his hands together like a little boy waiting for dessert after a dinner of turnip stew. “My mom and dad said she can stay with them for as long as I need!” he said excitedly.

“That’s fantastic,” Kris said, overwhelmed with happiness at the joy he knew the little dog would bring into their lives. Funny how a night of getting wasted led to this.

“Yeah…now, we need to get her some food bowls and a collar, and some toys and treats and a sweater.”

“A sweater? Are you serious? You want to dress her up?” he said with amusement. “I know you like fashion and everything, but--”
“It’s winter, Kris and she doesn’t have any fur! She’ll get cold! The doggie clothes are in aisle seven, come help me pick something out.”

Kris gripped his boyfriend by the face and planted a huge kiss on his lips. “You are the sweetest man ever,” he said after he’d stolen Adam’s breath away, “but I’m not letting her wear anything with polka dots.”

“No polka dots,” he assured Kris. “Oh, and Jen said that they have obedience classes here on Saturday afternoons and that’s important because this breed is very independent,” he said as he led them to aisle seven.

“Adam, you realize that if we take her to a class…well there will be other owners there, too,” he said with concern. How is he going to do socializing with strangers like that?

Adam stopped them in front of a display of dog hoodies. “I know, but…I’ll have you and Fifi with me…and that’ll help, right?” he asked as if Kris could really answer that question.

“You tell me, will it?”

“I want to try,” he said with steely determination in his voice, and then he spotted a dark blue little sweater with black paw prints on it. “How about this one?”

“Perfect.”

The cart was completely full with toys, food, treats, a collar and leash, puppy pads, two bowls and several more sweaters by the time they were done. “You sure she needs all this?” Kris asked as he hauled along a dog crate that was too big for the cart. “Alright, alright…just asking!” he said, trying not to laugh when Adam glared at him.

After a brief argument, they ended up splitting the cost of the supplies and loaded everything up into Kris’ car. He was pretty sure he’d seen the trunk sink about a foot when they dropped the bag of food in it. Too cute. When they got back inside, Jen had Fifi all ready to go in her new blue sweater, along with a free booklet about puppy care.

“You ready, girl?” Adam cooed, scooping her up and giggling at how fast her little tail was wagging as she tried to lick his nose. “Thanks for everything, Jen,” he told the smiling young girl.

“My pleasure,” she returned. “A new session of classes is starting on the twenty-seventh. Hope to see you guys there.”

“Count on it,” said Adam while Kris nodded in agreement.

As they drove to Fifi’s temporary home, Kris figured out exactly how he wanted to tell Adam that they were ready live together.

Chapter 45
Kris trotted up the stairs to the loft where he lived with Ethan, grinning widely and holding a bouquet of rare wild flowers in his hand that he knew his boyfriend would love since he was studying horticulture. He’d been so excited when class got out an hour early because it meant he could rush home and wish Ethan a Happy Valentine’s Day that much sooner. He turned the key in the lock and opened the door. “Ethan, I’m home!”

No reply.

He moved further into the apartment and heard sounds coming from the bedroom. What? Wait…no! Kris caught his breath and his heart stuttered to a halt in his chest. No, not again…he wouldn’t…he said he’d never do it again! Hoping against hope that he was just imagining things, he made his way to the bedroom with a death grip on the wild flowers. Please let it be the TV, music…anything… But he could already see the horrible truth through the open door, looming ever larger as he approached. There he was, the man who’d cheated on him once before, bending some twink in half and fucking him right in their bed. He choked out a loud sob as he stood there, mesmerized by steady slap of the betrayer’s body against the boy toy. Why? Why? I’ve done everything he’s ever asked of me…been the perfect boyfriend. Why am I not good enough?

“Kris!” Ethan exclaimed in surprise when he heard the pathetic sound, but he merely stopped thrusting and didn’t even pull out. “I…I…”

The bouquet fell from Kris' hands and landed on the floor with a soft rustle like ten butterflies had just dropped dead. He hung his head, turned around and left the room with his heart in shreds. He should have been irate. He should have shoved the stupid flowers right down Ethan’s stupid throat. Tears plopped down onto the wooden floor, making dark stains to renew the ones that had dried up just two months ago. “Why?” he mumbled as he heard Ethan coming up behind him.

“I’m so sorry, Kris,” he said, wrapping his arms around him, “I promise that it didn’t mean anything and it’ll never happen again. I love you, sweetie.”

I hate it when he calls me that. “But why, Ethan, why?” He gazed at his boyfriend with eyes drowned in grief, waiting for him to say something that would make the pain less suffocating, but Ethan just shrugged his shoulders and said, “I got you some roses for Valentine’s Day.”

***

Kris curled his compact form into a tight ball and wept as the memory tormented him. Huge, wracking sobs tore from his throat and spilled out onto the soft pillow beneath his head. I can’t believe I forgave him after that…again.

“Angel?” came a croaky voice from the dark.

His cries had woken up his lover even though he’d tried to hold them back. Lying there in the dead of night, Kris poured out the pain he felt from years of letting people walk all over him.

“Oh my god, Kris, what’s the matter, baby?” Adam enveloped him with his entire body and started stroking his hair. “Shhhhh…it’s all right, I’ve got you now…it’s all right…” He began to hum softly as he held and comforted Kris.
“Adam,” he stuttered through his hiccuping, choked weeping.

“I’m here…was it a dream?”

“N-no…” He tried to continue but found that the tears weren’t done, and he cried into his boyfriend’s chest until he was a wrung out rag devoid of all moisture.

Adam reached over and flicked on the little lamp on the nightstand. It cast a dim, soft glow into the room, revealing Kris’ red eyes and puffy face. Adam handed him some tissues and kissed him on the forehead. “You want to talk about it?” he asked, sitting up against the headboard and pulling Kris into his arms again.

“What time is it?” Kris asked after blowing his nose.

“About four in the morning.”

He sighed and nuzzled into Adam’s neck. “I don’t know why I woke up, but when I did I got so excited about tomorrow that I couldn’t go back to sleep. But then…I just started remembering things, stuff from last year about Ethan and…Adam?”

“Mmm?”

“I really don’t want any flowers for Valentine’s, okay? And I hope you don’t mind if I don’t get you any.”

“Whatever you want, angel,” Adam said softly, “and no I don’t mind at all. I don’t care about flowers…I care about you. Look at me.” He tilted Kris’ face up and kissed the corner of his watery eye. “I’m never going to cheat on you.”

How many times had he heard those words from other men only to have his heart broken repeatedly? Too many, but I believe Adam…I do. “I know you won’t, it’s just…”

“Memories are hard to ignore.”

“Yeah.”

They cuddled quietly for a while, neither feeling the need to speak because they both understood what it was like trying to battle the past, to face it squarely and then make it shut up and go away. Tired old broken records spinning the same false messages over and over saying ‘you’re not good enough, you’re too boring, you’re a damaged freak, he’ll leave you in the end.’ It could wear a person’s voice out, attempting to yell over the noise and tell them that they’re wrong. I’m not boring. I’m good enough. Shit, I’m so tired. Kris breathed in the scent of his lover until he gradually felt his consciousness drift and fell fast asleep.

Five hours later, he woke to the feel of soft lips against his own. Mmmm. “Morning, baby,” he murmured against his favorite freckles. God I love waking up next to him. Kris found that he was starting to dread the days that he slept at home instead of enjoying the time alone, which was a sign to him that the time to move in with Adam was fast approaching. Over the years, he had always agreed to living with a boyfriend before he was ready to and ended up silently resenting it. This feels right though, being here with him. It’s almost time…I need to talk to Matt.

Adam kissed him gently for a full minute, his arms and legs still wrapped around him like a blanket
as they exchanged stale breath without concern, their morning arousals pressed hotly against each other. “Morning, lover,” he whispered and nibbled on Kris’ bottom lip, making him moan softly. “I’d like nothing more than to make love to you right now,” he said, “but we need to go take care of Fifi before we leave on our trip.”

“Tease.”

“Guilty as charged,” Adam smirked and then began to untangle their bodies. He’d been going to his parents’ house every day that week to feed the puppy, play with her, take her outside and clean up the crate that she slept in at night. Kris had joined him on several occasions and delighted in the way that Fifi seemed to jump for joy when she saw Adam. She really is his dog. He also loved Adam’s attentiveness as he tried to learn everything about taking care of a puppy. Plus it was rather hilarious when he complained about how disgusting it was to clean up dog poop.

They rolled out of bed and took turns using the bathroom to get showered and dressed. As Kris got ready while Adam made breakfast, he tried to imagine where they were going that weekend. Kris had been amazed that Adam managed to get the time off so soon after starting his new job, but apparently he was becoming so popular there that he wasn’t in danger of being fired just for missing one Saturday. He was so incredible last night. Kris shuddered a little as he pulled on his jeans, remembering how the sizzling combination of his lover’s raw sex appeal and boyhood charm had made him so horny that he’d been close to jumping up on the stage and begging Adam to do him right there in front of everyone. And the sex when we got back here...jesus. The wolf had been on fire, strong, dominant and rough, biting and sucking Kris’ skin so hard while they fucked that Kris was now applying concealer to his neck. I’m such a lucky bastard.

They shared a breakfast of scrambled eggs, fruit and toast, after which Kris brought the small suitcase he’d packed at home yesterday outside to the curb. “Tell me again why we’re taking a cab?” he asked Adam, trying to keep his tone causal.

“I didn’t tell you in the first place, you sneaky rabbit,” Adam responded with a sideways smirk at him.

Busted.

***

“Fifi! Where are ya girl?” Adam called out as soon as he stepped into his parents’ house. They’d left the taxi running outside, but they only planned to be there for five minutes or so. A series of little yips suddenly sounded along with a clattering of tiny nails on the hardwood floor and Fifi came tearing into the front entrance so fast that her feet flew out from beneath her. She landed on her belly and came to a sliding halt about two feet from Adam and Kris, who both laughed at her cuteness as she bounded right up again. “Come here you sweet thing,” Adam giggled and squatted down so he could scoop her up. Tail wagging into a blur of brown, she hopped into his arms and began to squirm and wriggle in her attempts to lick his face.

“Hey Fifi,” Kris smiled and reached out to pet her behind the ear. He was rewarded with a few wet puppy kisses to the back of his hand before Adam set her back down. She danced around their feet as they made their way into the kitchen where they found Adam’s parents having a late breakfast.
“Good morning, son…Kris, always nice to see you,” said Eber, putting down his fork and watching Fifi jump up on Adam’s legs. “She missed you,” he chuckled. “I have to admit that I wasn’t too keen on the idea at first, but she’s really a joy to have around.”

“That’s because you don’t have to clean up her accidents,” said Leila good-naturedly. “I don’t really mind…she’s very sweet, Adam, and she’s doing a lot better with the puppy pads lately.”

“Is she? What a good girl you are, Fifi,” he cooed as he walked into the pantry to get her food.

Leila smiled and stood up to get another cup of coffee. “How are you, Kris? Excited about the weekend?”

“Very, although I have no idea where we’re going. I bet you do,” he said grinning warmly at her.

“You’re looking so lovely this morning, Leila.”

Her laugh in response to that sounded like a violin playing staccato notes and Kris could suddenly imagine why Eber fell in love with her. “Flattery isn’t gong to work I’m afraid,” she said, “I’m sworn to secrecy and so is my husband so don’t even try.”

_They are such awesome people. Adam is so lucky. “Aww, well it was worth a shot, right?”_

After Fifi was happily chowing down and Adam had quickly cleaned out her crate, the couple said their goodbyes and thanked the Lamberts for taking care of Fifi while they were gone. The taxi took them out of town, got onto the 110 and headed due south for almost thirty minutes. _There’s only ocean at the end of this road._ Kris was thinking so hard about what else could be south that he almost missed it when the cab got off the highway and drove west. “Oh wow, are we going to the airport? We’re flying somewhere, aren’t we?” he asked excitedly. Kris loved to travel and his imagination was already running wild thinking about some exotic weekend getaway to a place he’d only dreamed of visiting.

Adam chuckled at his enthusiasm but only pecked him on lips as a way of answering. They were coming up on Hawthorne Municipal Airport, a smaller airfield for non-commercial planes. Kris fully expected them to pass it on the way to the main international airport, so when the cab slowed down and turned in, he caught his breath and pushed his hands and nose against the window like an overzealous dog begging to be let out. “What? We’re…oh my god, are we going in one of those?” he asked, gazing in wonder at all the small aircraft.

“Yep!” Adam chirped.

“Wow! I’ve always wanted to…wow…you rented seats on one of these? That must’ve cost a fortune!”

“Actually, we’re flying free courtesy of my Uncle Rob. He owns a plane that he uses to do private tours and was nice enough to be our personal chauffeur this weekend.”

Kris stared at him and felt giddy joy begin to bubble up in his chest. “This is going to be sooooo awesome! You are amazing!” he squealed and threw his arms around Adam, who caught him up in a tight hug and kissed the side of his head.

“You don’t even know where we’re going yet…just you wait.”

Bouncing in his seat a little, Kris remembered the list he’d made as a kid of all the thrilling things he’d wanted to do when he grew up and flying in a small, private plane was definitely on it. The majority of the activities such as bungee jumping, skydiving, exploring a cave, and visiting a jungle had never come to fruition because the little boy had eventually learned that it was more important not to take risks in life and that he should concentrate on how other people felt. “What if you get hurt riding your bike down that steep hill? I’d be so sad!” *Always her feelings before mine. Well not anymore!*

The taxi driver dropped them off at the main terminal building and helped them with their bags before accepting his payment along with a generous tip from Adam. “We’re meeting him at hangar twelve,” Adam said as they started walking along the buildings. Kris felt a little silly wheeling his small bag down the pavement after watching Adam sling a large duffle bag over one shoulder, looking all manly in a leather jacket and boots. He picked up his suitcase by the handle instead and if Adam noticed anything, it didn’t show on his face.

Adam’s uncle was a cheerful but soft-spoken man who seemed genuinely happy to be of service. *He’s family. He’s probably thrilled to see Adam doing this kind of thing with another man.* “Nice to finally meet you, Kris, sorry I missed you at Thanksgiving. Heard an awful lot of great things about you.”

Kris smiled and shook his hand. “Thank you and thank you for this…really.”

“My pleasure. Well, she’s all fueled up and ready to go.”

“Where are we going?” he asked, but Rob was obviously in on the surprise and wouldn’t say.

“Patience, angel, you’ll find out soon enough,” Adam said as they tossed in their bags and climbed aboard.

Just the tiniest whisper of his mother’s voice floated through Kris’ head telling him that it was dangerous to fly in small planes like this, but he ignored it completely. *No more than flying on a commercial plane, probably safer even.* He couldn’t stop saying ‘wow’ as he tried to look at everything. Inside the airplane were six leather passenger seats, two fold out tables and two sets of curtains, one separating the cockpit from the rest of the plane and another that closed around a lavatory in the far back. He also noted an unmarked wooden crate on the floor. “Wow,” he said for the tenth time, taking in all the mysterious instruments and switches in the cockpit.

“Time to buckle up, boys,” said Rob and made a call to the air traffic control to let them know he was ready for take off.

They sat down in the seats closest to the front and fastened their seatbelts. “Baby, I don’t know how you could possibly have known, but traveling in one of these has been on my wish list since I was ten!”

Adam winked at him. “I called your mom. Got her number from your phone when you were asleep one morning.”

*No way, my mom? But…but…damn!…that was pretty cool of her!* Kris’ face almost wasn’t big enough to contain his bright smile that beamed with love and appreciation at his boyfriend’s thoughtfulness. “Why you little…you incredible…oh look! The propeller is starting!” He couldn’t decide which was more fascinating, watching Rob maneuver the plane or staring out the window as they started to move, so he just kept switching back and forth until he heard Adam giggling. “What?”
“You…you’re so cute!” he chortled, looking immensely pleased at how much Kris was enjoying himself.

Kris stuck out his tongue at him and went back to hyper observant mode, heart racing with the acceleration of the aircraft as it sped toward the end of the small runway. “Here we go!” It took off without a hitch and began its ascent into the blue sky. Higher and higher it climbed over the large expanse of the international airport and the sprawling city, but soon all the buildings got smaller and Kris turned his attention to the surrounding landscape.

Adam’s face was also plastered to the window, but he seemed to be staring right down at the ocean.

“It doesn’t bother you?” Kris asked him quietly so that Rob wouldn’t overhear.

“Not this high up. It’s actually quite beautiful,” he murmured in a wistful tone, but then smiled affectionately at Kris. “So, what do you think so far?”

_I hope he’ll be able to walk on the beach someday._ “Are you kidding me? If I wasn’t strapped into this seat I’d be kissing your face off right now!”

Rob chuckled at that. “We’re almost at cruising altitude, and then I’m going to close these curtains and you can do whatever you want as long as you don’t make the place bounce too hard.”

“Awesome,” said Kris and waggled his eyebrows in promise at Adam, who reached over and squeezed his thigh none too innocently.

Once past the imprints of humanity, the San Bernardino Mountains stretched out for miles below them, snowcapped peaks jutting out and surrounded by masses of green pine trees in a breathtaking display of nature. Kris thought it looked like an abstract fresco painting he’d once seen at a museum.

“Alright you two, you’re free to move about the cabin,” Rob joked in that soft voice he had, “and don’t mind me, I’ve got the lovely sounds of a loud engine and broadcasting chatter to listen to. I’ll turn on the radio for you back there.”

After the curtains were closed, Kris unbuckled at once and went to sit on Adam’s lap so he could make good on his promise. “We’re making out on a plane,” he giggled after about a minute of heavy kissing.

“So true, to the catchy tunes of Matchbox Twenty if you can believe that,” Adam snorted.

“I like this song,” said Kris, “I wish I could be a superhero, too. I used to wear Spiderman underoos when I was little,” he blurted out before he could stop himself and then blushed when he realized what he’d said. _Oh my god, way to embarrass yourself, Kris._

Adam laughed loudly and squeezed him tight. “I can totally see that…you in your little undies running around, pretending to spin webs and catch bad guys.”

Kris started kissing him again to get him to shut up. It worked.

About an hour and a half into the flight they were crossing the basins, dunes and ranges of the vast Mojave Desert. “Man, isn’t Death Valley down there somewhere?” Kris asked, taking in the sparse patches of green amidst all the brown.
Adam knelt down in front of the mysterious crate and pulled the lid off. “It’s a bit north of here, but don’t worry, we’re not going there. You hungry?”

“Wow, you thought of everything didn’t you?” he said, more of a statement on Adam’s attention to detail than a question as a cool cloud of vapor escaped from the box. This is going to be the best Valentine’s ever.

They asked Rob to turn off the radio and enjoyed a light but romantic lunch of Bruschetta topped with tomatoes and basil served with Brie cheese and a bottle of wine that Adam retrieved from a storage cupboard. Kris could hardly believe that he was sipping wine in a private plane like some kind of fancy, important person. His humble roots in Arkansas felt very far away just then. It made him wonder how it had been for Adam to grow up in a wealthy family, and suddenly he remembered that he didn’t even know what the Lamberts’ did for a living. It had never come up and he’d been too shy to ask them at Thanksgiving. “So, I don’t mean to pry since you’ve never mentioned it, but what do your parents do?” he asked a bit tentatively.

Adam put down his glass on the fold out table and considered Kris seriously. “It’s okay. They don’t usually talk about it because they don’t want to make people uncomfortable, and I guess I just kind of follow their lead. “My dad is the CEO of F.Y.E.”

Kris’ mouth fell open but he snapped it shut immediately. “Really? You mean For Your Entertainment?”

“Yes really,” he said with an amused expression. “Does that bother you?”

“Not at all, I’m just surprised,” he said, still feeling a bit stunned that his boyfriend’s father was the head of one of the biggest retailers of music and entertainment media in the country. “I didn’t figure your dad for a business man.”

“Well he started out as a DJ, but he’s very smart and has a good mind for that kind of thing. It’s funny though because I don’t even buy CDs there. I prefer local places like the one Ali works at.”

“But you could probably get free music!”

“I don’t care. I don’t want special treatment when I didn’t do anything amazing to earn it. Besides, big chains like that are taking over all the local stores,” Adam said, his face clearly showing his distaste for that practice. “You wouldn’t believe how many arguments I’ve had with my dad about it. He’s just too ambitious for his own good though.”

Now that doesn’t surprise me at all…probably where Adam learned to be so determined. “I agree… and I think I love you even more now,” said Kris with a growing need to show Adam exactly how amazing he was.

“Because of my dad?” Adam frowned.

“No, because of your sense of justice, your work ethic…and stubbornness,” he said and then added sincerely, “stubborn in the best way possible.”

Adam looked as if he were struggling to accept these compliments. He shook his head and swirled his wine around in the glass before sighing and smiling. “Thank you, angel.” He reached over and pulled Kris into his lap again. “Want to make out some more?” he suggested slyly as he slid his
hands down Kris’ back and cupped his ass.

“Like I’d ever say no.”

But just then Rob’s gentle voice came over the intercom. “Sorry to interrupt, but since we’re flying in a relatively low traffic area right now, I was wondering if either of you would be interested in piloting for a bit.”

Kris gasped with his lips just an inch from his lover’s. “Oh my god! For real!? It’s only like a dream come true!”

“I think that would be a yes,” Adam called up to his uncle, beaming at Kris who started clapping his hands in excitement.

“Now take a few breaths and calm down,” said Rob when Kris sat down in the co-pilot’s chair all riled up like a rocket engine about to explode into space. “Your hands have to be steady and you need to concentrate, okay?”

“Okay…okay.” After a few minutes he was able to contain himself and Rob told him what to do.

“Pull the control wheel towards you and you can take her up a little. Nice and easy does it, not too fast.”

“Oh my god…I’m flying a plane! Adam! Look at me!” he squeaked while desperately trying to keep calm as the plane ascended.

“I see you, baby,” Adam replied, lips twitching and eyes glinting with love that Kris was too busy to notice at the moment.

“That’s enough…that’s fine right there,” said Rob.

He eased up on the wheel and gazed out at the clear blue sky. I’m flying! Somehow the experience made him feel utterly free and rebellious, as if he were telling everyone who’d advised him to play it safe to fuck off. Rob let him control the aircraft for twenty minutes and then asked Adam if he wanted a turn.

“I’m fine, thanks,” he replied.

“What? Why not?”

But it was Rob who answered Kris’ question. “First time I let Adam fly I think he was ten years old,” he said while fondly looking at his nephew. “Anyhow it’s probably better that way since we’re nearing the general Las Vegas area and things are going to get crowded up here.”

“Are we…is that where we’re going?” Kris had a fleeting thought of the two of them getting wasted and waking up to find that they were married. He laughed to himself even though he wasn’t sure where Nevada stood on the issue of same-sex marriage these days.

“Nope!” Adam said, snickering like a mischievous boy intent on keeping his secret as long as possible. “Come on, angel, let’s go back and enjoy the scenery. And by scenery,” he murmured into Kris’ ear, “I don’t mean the desert.”
Kris shivered and politely asked Adam’s uncle to turn the radio back on and close the curtains.

They had to duck their heads a bit to walk to the rear of the plane, but once they got to the back seats that faced away from the cockpit, Adam pushed Kris down into one and dropped to his knees. “This is going to be way easier than the time we did it on the way to Arkansas,” he said as he made quick work of Kris’ belt buckle, licking his freckled lips and looking up at him through long lashes.

“I can’t believe I’m about to get head in an airplane seat…and your uncle is right up there.” Kris giggled, but in only increased the sense of recklessness that he was feeling today, and he eagerly began to shove his jeans down toward his ankles while Adam looked on hungrily.

Kris loved the feel of his lover’s mouth, the heat that enveloped his needy cock and Adam’s outrageously long tongue that could curl almost all the way around him, kind of like a hand jerking him off only softer and wetter. But nothing was more incredible than when that graceful throat swallowed him down, muscles contracting and squeezing his length…absolute heaven, and made even better with the knowledge that this was an act born of trust and love that he once thought was permanently out of reach. Adam’s nose pushed forward until it was nearly touching Kris’ groin and he swallowed again while flickering his tongue. The sensations were enough to make Kris bite the inside of his cheek hard to keep from moaning loudly.

“Mmmmm,” Adam hummed with his mouthful, eyes sparkling deviously as though he knew that those vibrations would drive his man insane, which they did.

After the copper taste of blood met his tongue, Kris looked down and saw raven hair in his lap before Adam slowly pulled back, his lips bright red, stretched tight and grinning wickedly the best they could.

“Fuck.” The word burst out of Kris’ lungs along with all of his breath and he pried his fingers up from the half an inch of leather he’d dug them into.

Adam popped off and ran his tongue around his swollen lips. “Not quite finished with you,” he rasped in a temporarily dick-ruined voice.

Three torturous minutes of head-bobbing pleasure later, Kris came hard down his boyfriend’s throat and hoped that Rob would forgive him if the nail marks in the seat arms never faded.

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“We’re almost there,” said Adam, looking sated and relaxed in his chair as he sipped from a bottle of water. “Check out the view.”

“I am! It’s so beautiful!” They were following a river and Kris remembered his geography well enough to know that it was the Colorado, which would eventually lead to a massive rift in the earth. “We’re going to the Grand Canyon, aren’t we?”

“Yes,” said Adam, finally revealing their destination, “but we’re only going to see a bit of it today.”

Kris tore his eyes away from the striking layers of painted rock everywhere and his mouth tugged down at the corners. “How come? I want to see the whole thing!”
“We will,” Adam said bemusedly, “but we don’t have enough daylight left to do that today. Tomorrow Rob is going to give us an aerial tour.”

“Oh my god, this is so awesome! I’ve wanted to come here for ages! What are we doing tonight?”

This is so freaking cool!

“You’ll see.”

Neither of the men could contain their reactions to the beauty around them as the canyon began to fill their view, ancient land carved up by the powerful river over millions of years, bathed in late afternoon sun which brought out every shade of orange and red that Kris could possibly fathom. He glanced at Adam briefly and saw an expression of awe on his face just like the one he knew he was wearing. But all too soon Rob turned the plane south and started to descend. Trying not to be disappointed because he knew he’d get to see more tomorrow, Kris focused on the land surrounding the great gorge, which was quite breathtaking in and of itself.

He saw a small airport ahead of them and wondered what Adam had in store next. When they landed smoothly at the Grand Canyon National Park Airport, Rob taxied the plane to the terminal and unfolded the steps to let them out.

“Thanks again, Uncle Rob,” said Adam, “We’ll see you back here tomorrow around ten.” They shook hands and Kris saw him slip a piece of paper to his uncle.

Hmm…more surprises? “Yeah, can’t thank you enough for letting me fly, too. That was so incredible!”

“My pleasure, boys. See you in the morning.” He climbed back into the plane started driving it off, leaving the couple standing in the middle of the tarmac.

Kris was just starting to wonder how they were going get wherever they were going next when a black sedan pulled up. “Whoa! You don’t do anything half-assed, do you?” Kris exclaimed to Adam when a serious looking man got out and opened the car door for them.

“Not this weekend I don’t. Hop on in and don’t worry about the bags…Dave will get them,” Adam responded with a wide smile. He motioned towards the door and Kris got in, shaking his head in amazement at the amount of planning this must have taken. Well I did ask for good memories, but damn! So much effort, just for me. Dave obviously knew where they were going because he didn’t ask for an address, and as soon as they left the airport Adam pulled Kris to his side. “Did I mention yet today how much I love you, angel?”

“Yes, but I’ll never get tired of hearing it, so tell me again,” he said with a bit of sass.

“Getting cheeky with me, huh?” Adam pressed a button and a privacy screen slid closed between them and the driver. “I love you, I love you, I love you,” he whispered and with each recitation he pushed Kris father down onto his back until he was hovering over him completely. “You are my angel, and this is all for you, baby.”

Kris gazed up into his lover’s eyes and felt it. He knew that no matter how difficult things might be for them in the future, Adam would never treat him the way that others had, and he didn’t need a fancy weekend to be certain of that. “Thank you.”
Unfortunately, the sedan didn’t have tinted windows and when it stopped at a red light ten minutes into the trip, Adam noticed a man in the car next to them craning his neck to see what was going on in the back seat. Adam smirked as the man’s face twisted in disgust and went back to invading Kris’ mouth while flipping the guy off with one hand.

They traveled for about an hour and by the time the car slowed, Kris was dearly hoping that wherever they were had a bed. Please let this be a hotel. Adam gave him a last kiss on his bruised lips and sat up. He looked down at Kris and chuckled at his glazed eyes and tousled hair. “Hotel.”

“Oh thank god,” he puffed, sitting up and trying to arrange his clothes so that he didn’t look quite so rumpled, but there wasn’t much he could do about a certain part of his body standing at attention except pull his shirt down over it. He got out of the car wishing he could see more of what looked to be a beautiful hotel, but it was too dark out. Dave removed their bags from the trunk and Adam tipped him. I bet he’d be fine if he was famous. He seems so confident doing all of this.

The lobby inside was elegant yet simple. With all the large windows and a variety of plants and trees decorating every corner and surface, it gave the impression that one was still outside. Beautiful. Adam led them to the check in counter and took his driver’s license out. “Reservation for Lambert,” he told the middle-aged clerk.

“Oh yes, the presidential suite,” she said in a crisp, polite tone, but then she saw Kris and did a double take. “Er, um I think we may have made a mistake. I didn’t realize that you’d need an extra bed. Would you like me to have maintenance bring up a roll in cot?”

Adam looked stunned for a moment before narrowing his eyes and leaning over the counter to look squarely at the woman. “No I certainly would not, seeing as I like to sleep with my gorgeous man and not in a separate bed.” He put his arm around Kris and even pinched him on the ass for good measure.

“Oh! Oh my goodness! I’m terribly sorry…I didn’t, I mean…oh dear, you must think I’m…Mr. Lambert, I apologize, truly…”

Although he’d been just as outraged, Kris found himself biting back a laugh at the employee’s flustered state as she waved her hands around and tried to do everything possible to get Adam to stop staring daggers at her. He’s so fierce.

“Please forgive me, Mr. Lambert. Here are your room keys and if you could just please sign here?”

Adam grunted and signed the form.

Kris put a hand over his mouth so he wouldn’t giggle and followed Adam to the elevators.

“It’s not funny, Kris, people shouldn’t make assumptions like that,” he said sternly as he pushed the up arrow.

“Oh I know and I completely agree with you. It’s just…she looked like she was peeing herself…you’re so intimidating, baby,” he said and rose to his toes so he could kiss his formidable lover on the cheek.

“Good. Maybe it’ll teach her to think next time.” He glanced at Kris and his face softened immediately. “But enough about that, we’re here to have fun and I can’t wait until you see our room.”
“Holy shit! Are you like some kind of celebrity or politician and you forgot to tell me?” The suite was ridiculously large and luxurious with a king sized bed, a couch, a separate den, a little kitchenette and more amenities than Kris had ever seen in a hotel room before.

“Only the best for you, angel, and no I’m not. But come on, you’re missing the reason I booked this room.” He grabbed Kris by the hand and walked him further into the suite. There, on the other side of the enormous bed was a large, round Jacuzzi sunk into the floor.

Kris gasped. “Oh hell yeah! You are a fucking genius!” He dropped his bag and almost started stripping because hello, sex in a Jacuzzi?

“A little eager are you?” Adam purred and pulled him close.

“Totally your fault, you beast, kissing me like that in the car.”

Adam sighed dramatically as they embraced. “I guess I can accept the consequences…if you insist.”

“I insist,” Kris said huskily and licked Adam’s jaw. “Now get naked and get in there.”

“Such a demanding rabbit,” Adam murmured as he cupped Kris’ ass and snapped their hips together. “I think I like it.”

“Shit,” he gasped at the sudden pressure to his already aching dick, “I’m gonna give you until the count of ten,” Kris said in a firm but playful tone, backing away with a raised eyebrow at the man who might make him come in his pants if they didn’t get down to business soon. *Nearly an hour of hot kissing in the car...jesus...I’m amazed I even made it through that!*

Adam’s eyes widened for a brief second and then he began tearing off his clothes. “Definitely a bossy rabbit and I fucking love it.” Boots, socks and belt were off before Kris even got to two. After his shirt was flung onto the floor, Adam quickly bent down to the side of the Jacuzzi and pushed the button to start the jets.

“Five…six…” Kris had been joking around but damn it was hot to see his boyfriend responding to the game like that. Froth and bubbles began to roil on the surface of the water and he couldn’t wait to feel the relaxing heat combined with naked Adam. *Yum.* Still completely clothed, Kris licked his lips in anticipation and massaged his bulging erection, watching as tight jeans were peeled off that gorgeous body. “Seven…eight…”

Adam dipped his toe in the water and snatched it out quickly. “Ooch hot!”

“Nine…” Kris squeezed himself and made a little ‘mph’ sound with his lower lip caught between his teeth and Adam turned around.

“Fuck…angel, look at you,” he moaned, his hand dropping to his own length as he stared and shuddered, but suddenly a devilish gleam sparked in his eye and he started to stroke himself. “You want me? Then you get naked, too,” he said in a come-hither voice.
Oh damn. There was no way Kris could resist such a heavenly vision or ignore the lust dripping in his lover’s voice no matter how much he’d been enjoying the game. “Yes,” he breathed, unable to stop his hands from shedding the pesky clothing getting in the way between him and freckled skin. Shit…how does he do that?

Adam continued to fondle his dick, slowly sliding his hand up over the head and back down again while thumbing his slit every once in a while. Certain that his eyes must have been created for the sole purpose of watching his lover masturbate, Kris began to unbutton his pants with fumbling fingers, but he stopped abruptly when Adam collected a tiny bit of pre-cum from the tip of his cock with his middle finger and then sucked on it. “Mmmm, want some?” he teased as he started sliding his finger in and out of his mouth.

All Kris could do in response was whimper and get on with stripping as fast as possible. He almost stumbled trying to get his socks off but finally, finally he was bare and headed for the gorgeous creature. “Gimme.”

But Adam just blew him a kiss and stepped into the tub. “Come and get me,” he said silkily while sinking down and leaning backwards enough to wet his hair and most of his body. When he stood back up all covered in droplets with steam surrounding him like some sort of ethereal sex god, Kris choked on his spit as he tried to swallow and would’ve dived into the water if he knew it wouldn’t crack his head open. Mine. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and hurried forward to join the steamy man now beckoning him with a crooked finger.

A sigh escaped Kris’ lips when he was all the way in; the heat was as good as a Swedish massage in relaxing his muscles and he used his toes to push himself off the bottom and into Adam’s waiting arms. Sitting on a built in bench, Adam reeled him in and Kris was a fish all to happy to meet his captor. “You are the worst tease I have ever met,” he said as he straddled Adam’s lap and groaned softly when their erections connected.

“Thank you,” Adam replied smugly. He gripped Kris’ firm ass and adjusted him so that their bodies fit together like the last two pieces being joined to complete an erotic puzzle. Drops of water fell from his slicked back ebony hair onto skin dappled with miniscule beads of wetness, clear freckles highlighting the natural ones spray painted on naked shoulders. Kris watched as little rivulets trickled down his lover’s neck, making him want to lick and lick and lick. “So sexy,” he moaned and gathered some drops with his tongue before kissing Adam’s full lips. He was more than ready to attack that mouth or to have his attacked, he didn’t care which, but Adam was pushing on his chest.

“I lean back…get your hair wet…want to see you dripping,” he commanded in a needy tone while supporting Kris’ lower back and continuing to bend him towards the water. “Beautiful…beautiful,” he murmured.

Kris’ chest was on fire where Adam’s hand was touching it. He could feel the hot flecks of water leaping onto his face and he closed his eyes, thinking that only Adam could make the simple act of wetting hair so sensual. When his ears were submerged, he heard his heart pounding rapidly and imagined his blood rushing through his veins, alive with heat and arousal. Adam brought him back up, immediately cupped a handful of water and brought it to Kris’ cheeks and lips so they were glistening wet. “Perfect.”

Kris felt Adam’s dick twitch and suddenly he couldn’t handle the slow seduction a minute longer. Too hot…must have him. He flung his arms around the beauty and kissed him hard on the mouth, thrusting his tongue and sucking on freckles like they were dots of powdered sugar. His enthusiasm was rewarded by nails digging into his flesh as Adam kissed back hot and heavy and began to grind
their lengths together. Kris groaned into Adam’s mouth.

Adam stood them up and Kris wrapped his legs around his love, clinging to him as he felt them move, still kissing, to the other side of the tub. Jets of water graced their calves, hips and backs until they reached the edge and Adam unhooked Kris’ legs and began to turn him around.

“No…want…” he whined, trying to continue to thrust, desperate for the stimulation, but Adam had other plans and manhandled Kris into position so that his knees rested on a ledge in the tub, forcing most of his body out of the water. He shivered in the cool air, placed his hands in front of him on the tiles outside the tub and looked back at Adam over his shoulder with curiosity.

Adam winked and nipped him on the ass, which was quite effective in persuading Kris that this new arrangement would be worth his while. He leaned down, resting on his forearms with his ass just clear of the boiling water and shuddered in anticipation when he felt his cheeks separate. But the first thing to touch his wet skin was Adam’s palm in a hard, stinging slap. “Fuck!” he gasped. “Again!”

Smack! “Yes! Again…please!” Three more times Adam spanked him, each one smarting deliciously and making Kris pant with pleasure.

Just as he was about to beg for more he felt Adam’s soft, wet tongue begin to lave at the red blushes he’d created, meandering all over Kris’ round cheeks until it finally licked in between them.

“Oohhhhh…Adam…” he moaned, breathing heavily as his ring of puckered muscle fluttered and twitched under the tongue bath. One long lick across his hole and up to his tailbone almost made Kris attempt to grab his half submerged dick, but before he could manage it, Adam slid a long finger into his entrance and bent it to touch the spot it had memorized. Kris’ knees slipped a little on the ledge as he let out a sharp breath and threw his head back.

“Perfect,” came the word again from his lover’s lips as he added another finger and began to scissor the two apart, making sure to brush against the bundle of nerves frequently.

“Need you…want…” Kris panted through the bliss, craving the fullness of Adam’s cock, the way the head felt when it passed through into his body, how all of his muscles quivered and gripped every inch as it thrust in and out. “Please…” he begged. Suddenly a wave of water splashed onto his back with the force of Adam’s body rising up while Kris was pulled down from the ledge and impaled completely in one motion.

He cried out with pleasure and the shock of renewed heat to his skin as Adam drew back and plunged in again. “Angel…so gorgeous,” Adam whispered into his ear, “love you…love you…” he moaned and reached around to grasp Kris’ rock hard length leaping in the bubbles.

The tiles surrounding the Jacuzzi became flooded with water from the motions of the two lovers. Sweat broke out on their skin from sex and steam and they fucked or made love, it didn’t matter…only ecstasy registered in Kris’ brain because Adam was forced to move into him like waves, slow motion thrusts with one arm tight around his torso and the other pumping his dick with equally unhurried strokes.

The play drew out for longer than Kris had ever experienced and when the pleasure finally began to build deep in his core, he arched his head back in a silent plea to be bitten by the tender yet ruthless man driving him wild. “Yessss,” he hissed when he felt Adam’s teeth cut into his neck. “Adam…harder…oh god I’m almost…yes…right there…right…yes!” His body convulsed as Adam sucked his skin into a flaming red mark and cum shot out of his slit to be swept up and mixed into water.

It was a full five minutes later when Adam came at last, arms and legs completely entwined around
Kris who was standing with his hands gripping the edge of the tub as Adam humped him from behind until he shouted out a long wail of pent up passion.

The men fell back into the water, a ball of spent flesh drifting with toes touching the bottom to keep them afloat, relaxing and kissing mouths wet with vapor and sweat.

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“That was…”

“Yeah…”

“Jesus…”

“Hot…”

Adam and Kris lay naked side by side on the giant bed, blood pounding in their ears as their bodies cooled and breathing grew less strained. Kris lifted his arm with difficulty because it felt like it weighted fifty pounds and looked at his hand. “I’m all wrinkled…like an old man.” Damn…damn… water sex is my new favorite.

Adam chuckled but didn’t move an inch. They were both exhausted and it was only seven o’clock at night, but an audible grumble from Kris’ stomach made Adam turn his head. “Room service,” he grinned, “because there is no way I’m putting clothes on or leaving this room after that.”

“Good plan,” Kris replied gratefully, “can we get them to feed us, too?” They giggled at the thought of being buck-naked on their backs and spoon fed by hotel staff. After a while Adam finally rolled over and dragged himself to the desk to get the menu and then flopped back onto the bed. Kris ended up ordering a rib eye steak, smashed potatoes and a large salad because he was seriously starving and Adam had insisted that he should get whatever he wanted. When a knock at the door came twenty minutes later they were cuddled up together. Groaning a bit, Adam got up, threw on a fluffy hotel robe and answered the door.

Kris sighed contentedly and heard a woman say “compliments of the front desk” before leaving. “Oh man, that smells so good,” he said, massaging his complaining belly as Adam wheeled in a cart laden with food.

“Look what that nice lady from check in sent us,” Adam smirked and held up a large gift basket full of fruit, chocolate, cheese and crackers. “Guess she’s feeling a little guilty,” he chortled. “Ahhh, Ayala Rosé Majeur, excellent. Come sit down with me, angel.”

Once seated at the table with everything spread out before them and a glass of champagne in each hand, they toasted to their love and to new memories. It would have been a very elegant scene if they hadn’t been so hungry, but they didn’t care about manners right then and just laughed and talked as they chowed down like ravenous wolves.

It was still only nine o’clock when they crawled into bed. After snuggling up in the middle of the huge mattress, Adam clicked on the TV and scrolled through the pay per view menu until Kris said stop at ‘Ferris Beuller’s Day Off.’ “For real?” Adam asked him with a snort.
“I love that movie! It’s so funny. I could watch it a hundred times.”

“Alright, lover, just for you then.”

Kris made it about three-fourths of the way through before his eyelids started to droop. “Don’t know why I’m so tired…it’s still so early,” he mumbled, stifling a yawn.

“Too much excitement for one little boy,” Adam teased, but he was obviously sleepy, too. He turned off the movie and tried to get out of bed, but Kris held on to him tightly.

“You’re so warm, where are you going?”

“I’m going to open the curtains,” he said as he pried himself away and walked over to the ceiling high glass doors that led out to a balcony. “Trust me, you’ll thank me in the morning.” Once the dark night was exposed, Adam climbed back into bed and spooned around Kris. “Love you, angel,” he murmured, “Are you having a good time so far?”

“The best…love you, too,” Kris responded drowsily. “Will you hum that song for me?”

“‘Course I will.” Adam began to hum the angel melody quietly as he stroked Kris’ thigh.

“Mmm…so nice,” he said, feeling his body begin to sink into sleep, but just before he was about to drift off a thought occurred to him. “Adam?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“I’d really love to hear the words to that sometime.” Something about an angel.

“You will, tomorrow in fact,” Adam responded softly, never ceasing the caresses to Kris’ smooth skin.

“Really? When?” If he’d been more awake he would’ve jumped up and down in excitement.

“You’ll find out. It’s funny though, it’s actually more of a poem…I don’t usually rhyme so much when I write, but…anyway, you’ll hear it soon.”

“Is it about me?”

“Yes, now go to sleep. We have an early start tomorrow.”

“M’kay.” Adam kissed him on the temple and, carrying the beautiful images of his lover serenading him, Kris padded off to dreamland.

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At seven o’clock the next morning, the sound of a phone ringing brought Kris right out of his slumber with a jolt. His eyes popped open and he felt Adam move away to stop the jangling noise. “Yes, thank you,” he mumbled and then hung up. “Wake up call,” he said with a stretch and a yawn
before cuddling back up to Kris. “Happy Valentine’s Day, angel.”

“Mmmm, Happy Valentine’s Day, baby,” Kris replied, smiling as Adam nuzzled behind his ear. *Already so many good memories.*

“Why don’t you roll over and take a peek outside?”

Kris wasn’t sure he wanted to move because he was so comfortable, but he remembered Adam opening the curtains on purpose last night. *Wonder what’s out there that’s so special?* “Okay, but only if you roll with me.”

Adam chuckled and bit him gently on the ear. “I’ve got an ever better idea,” he said with a hint of mischief in his voice. Before Kris could ask what it was, Adam threw back the covers, scooped him up bridal style and hauled him out of bed.

“Damn, you’re better than a wake up call!” Kris exclaimed in surprise, shivering a bit as his bare skin met the air, “what’s so urgent that…whooooaaa…” Still in Adam’s arms, Kris caught his breath at the majestic scene outside. “It’s like a painting,” he whispered in awe. Adam set him down and went to grab some robes and slippers for them from the closet. When they stepped out onto the balcony, a fresh morning breeze swept across their faces, ruffling their hair as they watched the golden sun rise over the Sedona landscape. Kris leaned on the railing and tried to absorb it all.

“Incredible,” said Adam, coming up behind Kris and hugging him. “Just…”

Neither of them spoke for while after that, content to greet the day together with the sun. Lavender clouds streaked with red seemed to sway against the backdrop of the blue sky while a large puff of bright yellow crept in from the east. The red rock formations rising up from the earth cast an orange-pink glow from their peaks heavenward, and it was impossible to label any one aspect of the panorama as beautiful. Kris thought that it was indeed like a painting, the kind that you step way back from so you can get a sense of the whole masterpiece. It was times like these he felt sure that something larger than him was at work in the world. “Do you believe in God?”

“Hmm, I don’t know,” said Adam, “the jury is still out for me on that one, but this is definitely…spiritual, if that’s what you’re getting at. I think I believe in energy, spirit, the stars…the universe…” He tightened his arms a little more around Kris’ waist and kissed the side of his head. “What about you?”

“Yes, I think there’s a God, but I don’t believe in the same one my grandma does. I think that God must be much more forgiving, loving, accepting of everyone…and I mean everyone.”

“Amen to that. Well, maybe I’ll figure it out someday, maybe I won’t, but right now I’m just happy that I found you, angel,” he said sincerely in a way that made it clear that he thought finding Kris superceded everything else at this time in his life.

“Me, too,” said Kris.

Adam squeezed him and said that they had to get moving because they were supposed to be back at the airport by ten. Getting ready together was easy because the bathroom had a walk in shower with two separate showerheads, and there were also two sinks in addition to a large mirror spanning the whole side of one wall. Kris was not used to this kind of luxury, but he had to admit that it was nice to be pampered for a few days.
At eight-thirty the couple went downstairs for breakfast and enjoyed a full meal rather than the cereal and bagels that Kris had seen at lesser hotels. The coffee was excellent and by the time nine o’clock rolled around, Kris felt alert and excited about the day ahead of them. A tour of the Grand Canyon... in a plane...wow! Although someday he really wanted to hike the trails of the great gorge, he knew that this might be a once in a lifetime experience and that he could always return here in future to join the masses of tourists.

The same black sedan with the same serious driver was waiting for them outside the lobby door and Kris got his first look at the hotel. I was right...it is beautiful. At first glance one might get the impression of a large cabin, but the soft brown combined with tall stone columns and slanted roofs fit perfectly with the surrounding landscape of trees and towering rocks. Unlike many resorts that cleared great swaths of land to construct a bastion of modern wonders, the Amara Hotel looked as if it had been purposefully built in an attempt to accentuate the natural beauty around it. Somehow it made Kris feel better about the extravagance inside. He smiled at Adam who was also looking around and they got into the car.

This time they spent the hour drive gazing at scenery instead of making out, and every once in a while one of them would point to something particularly striking or interesting. When they arrived at the airport, Kris thought that the driver had brought them to the wrong spot, because instead of the small airplane he was expecting, a white helicopter with yellow, blue and red stripes painted down its tail was there instead. But Adam just smiled at Kris’ confused expression and said, “new ride today, makes it easier to land and take off without a runway.”

“Wow! We’re going to land somewhere and…and…” and Kris didn’t know what but he was beaming so brightly that Adam chuckled and planted a big kiss on his lips. So exciting! Never been in a helicopter before. Man, ma would totally flip out if she knew. I bet Adam didn’t tell her about that. He giggled just thinking about it and squirmed a little in his seat as the sedan slowed down, eager to get out and explore.

“Good morning,” Rob said when the driver dropped them off.

“Morning,” Kris said enthusiastically, “where’s your plane? Did you have to store it? Do you own this, too? Can I fly it?”

“Whoa there, slow down now,” he chuckled softly and grinned at Adam who had sparkles of mirth in his eyes.

“So adorable,” Adam said fondly and kissed him on the cheek. “We’re just renting this for today.”

“That’s right,” said Rob, “my plane is stored in one of the hangars. And we’ll see about you flying…it’s quite a bit more complicated than flying a plane. Climb aboard and we’ll get going.”

So awesome! He stepped up through the open door and saw four seats inside and windows everywhere. The door that Rob closed after him was half glass and he knew that the view through the wide windshield in the cockpit would be spectacular. “Oh man, we’ll be able to see so much this way!”

“Yep,” said Adam, “there’s even a sun roof,” he said jokingly.

Kris peered around as he settled in a front seat next to Adam. There’s that box again, wonder what’s in it this time? “The controls are different than the ones on the plane…that looks like a joystick,” he said, pointing into the cockpit.
“That’s the cyclic control,” said Rob. “Alright, strap in everyone.” He did a series of checks, adjusting various things and looking at dials before starting the chopper.

“Ready?” Adam asked and squeezed Kris’ hand after they’d buckled their seatbelts.

“Yes! You are the most amazing boyfriend ever!” he chirped as the long propellers began to rotate and the engine whirred into action. Every time he thought this trip couldn’t get any cooler, there was another incredible surprise around the corner that made him certain he was dating the most thoughtful, most generous, most loving man on earth. Such a shame that the majority of the world never gets to see him like this. All they know him as is a socially awkward singer and a hot catch. I hope that changes…such an amazing person should be appreciated by a lot more people.

Faster and faster went the blades and then they began to rise slowly from the ground. When they cleared the top of the terminal roof, Kris let out an excited whoop and punched his fist in the air, much to the amusement of the two other men. But Kris didn’t care if he was regressing to a childlike state, didn’t care what anyone thought of him, which was a serious departure from spending most of his life worrying about just that. Besides, Adam loves me no matter how I am. And just look at how happy he is, too!

Wearing a headset that completely covered his ears, Rob spent several minutes talking to the control tower about his intended flight path and then got the okay. They headed north towards the canyon rim, staying at treetop level as the terrain sloped gradually upwards, hiding the canyon from view. But suddenly the earth fell away from underneath them as they crossed the rim.

“Wow!”

“Nine miles of this gorgeousness,” Rob called back to them, “pretty impressive, don’t you think?”

“I’ll say!” exclaimed Kris as he stared at the incredible landscape created by nature’s powerful forces.

“Oh my god,” said Adam, wide eyed and gazing out the windows, “so beautiful…I never imagined…”

Kris whipped his head around and looked at him in surprise. “You’ve never been here before?” He’d just assumed that he had since he had an uncle who flew a plane.

“No…amazing,” Adam said, seemingly awestruck at vast expanse of rock, layered indefinitely with colors and texture not found anywhere in Los Angeles.

It made Kris even happier to know that they were both sharing this experience for the first time together. He grinned and returned to his attempts to memorize it all. “Damn, I didn’t bring a camera.”

Adam winked and pulled one out of his pocket. “I know it’s tiny, but it takes amazing pictures.”

“I just want a few,” said Kris, reaching out for it, “I don’t want to see everything through a lens.” He snapped several shots of some exceptionally stunning formations and then took a couple of Adam as he looked at the canyon and one of him grinning cheekily at Kris. Adam laughed at grabbed it back so he could take some pictures, too, and Kris struck a few ridiculous poses before blowing him a kiss to the clicking of the camera.
When they reached the midpoint of the rift, Rob turned the chopper west and began to follow the winding Colorado River below them for several miles. After a while the helicopter descended into the gorge and they had a close up view of the various geologic layers exposed by eons of erosion, blue-gray and red-brown steps leading down to the river. The pine trees crowding the rim were replaced by cactus and sagebrush on a wide, flat path deep inside the canyon.

Rob maneuvered the craft even lower, heading right towards the path below. “Are we landing there?” Kris asked in wonder.

“We are,” Adam nodded, “you hungry for lunch yet?”

“Oh my god, really? A picnic in the Grand Canyon?!” He clapped his hands together and pressed his face to the window in anticipation.

Rob selected a spot on the north side of the river where the canyon made its final plunge down to the Colorado and slowly set down the helicopter, but he didn’t power it off. Adam opened the door and pulled out the wooden crate, his hair blowing everywhere with the wind created by the strong propellers. Kris jumped out too and walked around to join his boyfriend.

“I’ll be back in an hour,” Rob yelled over the noise of the engine and spinning blades.

Adam gave him the thumbs up and the two men shielded their eyes from the dust kicked up by the ascending chopper. When it was out of sight, a peaceful silence settled over the valley. No signs of humanity could be seen wherever Kris turned and the only sounds that met his ears were the cry of a hawk flying above and the muted roar of the rapids far below. “Wow,” he whispered, because he didn’t feel that normal voices were appropriate here for some reason. *It’s like we went back in time…we’re all alone.*

“We’re all alone,” said Adam quietly like an echo, walking up to Kris and pulling him into his arms. “I love you,” he murmured as they gazed at each other.

Kris thought that the flecks of gray and dark blue in his lover’s eyes were just as gorgeous as the beauty that surrounded them. “I love you, too,” he returned and closed his eyes for the soft lips that he knew were about to touch his. They swayed together for a few minutes, kissing softly amidst the hush of nature, and then Adam drew back with a final peck.

“Lunch.” He opened the wooden crate, which Kris realized by now was a kind of cooler, and pulled out a blanket. “Spread this out?” he asked Kris, who did so while Adam removed several containers of food, two glasses wrapped in a towel, utensils, napkins and a thermos. “Not very romantic,” he chuckled as he held up the flask, “but a bottle of wine wouldn’t fit.”

“I’m not complaining, it looks amazing, Adam. Thank you so much, for everything. I mean I can’t even…” *How am I ever going to thank him enough?*

“It’s okay, sit down and relax…just enjoy the scenery while I set up our little picnic,” he said with a soft smile playing on his lips.

Kris nodded and gazed around the valley, noting the lush greenery that he’d never expected to find in such a dry place and even a patch of wild flowers. *Don’t look at those.* He didn’t want to be reminded of Ethan so he turned his attention skyward and watched a pair of hawks circling around each other like they were courting.
After a lunch of pulled pork sandwiches, potato salad, natural vegetable chips with artichoke dip and a small bunch of grapes, Kris was so full that he had to lie down. “Remind me to thank Rob. I assume he’s your supplier?”

“Yes. Such a great guy, really,” Adam replied and joined him on the blanket. The noonday sun beat down on them from the clear blue sky, and Kris felt like he was at a beach, basking in the light and warmth. He’d almost fallen asleep with an imprint of red-orange on the backs of his eyelids when Adam kissed him lightly on the cheek. “I have a present for you,” he said, eyes glinting with something like hopeful expectancy.

“Yeah?” Kris sat up and peered around, but unless it was an extremely small gift that could fit in a pocket, he didn’t see anything resembling a present amongst the remnants of their picnic.

“Mmhm. Come on over here.” He stood up and led Kris to a large rock that looked like a perfect backrest and sat down with Kris next to him. As they watched the river tumbling over the edge of a nearby cliff, Adam took Kris by the hand and began to sing.

Ohhh…it’s the angel song. He recognized the tune at once, a lilting melody sung in Adam’s higher register, and he closed his eyes so he could concentrate on the words and the sweet voice of his love.

“Sparkle and fire
You’re my angel of light
I was stuck but you showed me
The right way to fight”

Already Kris could feel tears begin to prick behind his eyelids and he squeezed Adam’s hand gently.

“Blood red feathers of love
Took me by surprise
Led me back to myself
Helped me shed the disguise”

Oh my Adam, my brave man… Adam’s voice seemed to fill up the vast space around them, sweeping through crevices of rock and even caressing the wings of the birds above playing at love.

“Come take my hand
We’ll face down the past
Memories can’t break up
A bond meant to last”

A tear trickled down Kris’ cheek as he resonated with the lyrics, firmly believing with every beat of his heart that they were true.

“Soar through the sky
Go on challenge the sun
But don’t you forget
To come back when you’re done
Just fold up those wings
And fall into my arms
Because heaven is here with me”

Yes it is. I’ll never forget…never.
“You steal all of the shoes
From the people who walked on you
Throw them and laugh
As they melt in a fire so blue”

Kris giggled a little as he imagined himself flying around with stolen shoes and hurling them into the tail of a comet.

“Strong body strong mind
You fly into the storm
But you always return
I’ll keep you safe, keep you warm”

Warm…want to be warm in his arms every night and morning…I’m going to tell him. He opened his eyes and smiled through the blurriness at Adam’s earnest face as the words streamed from his lips.

“Soar through the sky
Go on challenge the sun
But don’t you forget
To come back when you’re done
Just fold up those wings
And fall into my arms
Because heaven is here with me”

Adam turned Kris’ head with his hand and sang the last line straight into his eyes. “Heaven is here with me.”

My heart…my heart… Like the water cascading over the precipice beside them, tears spilled from his eyes and rained onto his chest as if they were soothing his love-pained heart. “Adam,” he choked out and, unable to find words to express himself, he cupped his boyfriend’s face and pressed the sweetest, most tender kiss he could manage onto those full, freckled lips he loved so much. “So beautiful…so amazing, thank you, thank you…god, I love you so much,” he sniffl ed and dropped a series of tiny pecks all over Adam’s face. “I have a present for you, too.” It’s the right time to say it.

Adam’s mouth turned up into a shining smile and he raised his eyebrows in question.

Go on…this is it. Kris took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I want us to live together…I think we’re ready…I’m ready,” he said with a little tremor in his voice, not because he was scared, but because of the magnitude of the moment.

Eyes wider than the canyon they were sitting in, Adam stared and stared but did not speak. His lower jaw fell open just a crack and suddenly his whole body shuddered. “You…I…we…angel, angel…oh my god…” he breathed. Slowly he brought his shaking hands to either side of Kris’ face and touched them gently to his skin.

If hearts could physically embrace then that might come close to what Kris was feeling right then. They sat for a minute longer suspended in time and the utter quiet of their private valley, warm hands on Kris’ cheeks and both pairs of eyes liquid love. In the next second Kris was on his back with Adam climbing on top of him, bodies pressed together fervently, kissing the words of joy and affection that neither of them could speak. Rocks and gravel seemed to leap aside for them and the hard ground felt like the softest velvet on earth if their hearts had anything to say about it. We’re
When they heard the choppy sounds of propellers cutting the air, the two lovers were standing next to the packed up box, arms wrapped around each other and lips locked in a silent exchange, chapped, swollen and ruby red from overuse.

The helicopter landed and still they didn’t part, didn’t care about the noise and the wind until Rob jumped out and called over to them. “Hey lovebirds…let’s hop to it!”

The rest of their journey felt almost surreal, dreamlike to Kris. Everything they passed from the unexpected thundering waterfalls of Havasu canyon to the blue green currents of its spring fed creek was punctuated with wonder by the fact that for the first time in his life, Kris was willingly taking the next step of commitment with a man and had done it on his own terms.

Adam and Kris couldn’t stop giggling and staring at each other as if they’d newly declared their love, and at one point Rob finally gave in to Kris’ begging and allowed him to unbuckle and sit on Adam’s lap for the remainder of the flight so they wouldn’t miss the dramatic scenery. The last landmark on their trip was the Havasupai Indian village of Supai located deep in the Grand Canyon, a green oasis reachable only on foot or horseback – or helicopter, but Rob took them higher in the sky so as not to disturb the native community.

The sun was beginning to set, and just when Kris thought they would be heading back to the airport, Adam’s uncle made a wide circle and flew them ever upwards and straight into the picturesque scene like a western movie. While lavenders and yellows had dominated the morning, it was seemingly a hundred shades of red that were painted across the sky with large strokes of a divinely guided brush. Even Rob caught his breath a little and the couple behind him moved up into the cockpit for a better view.

Kris was overwhelmed…with nature, with beauty, with love. He didn’t think his body had been made to contain it all and he wished he could bottle some of it for those days when he was less than joyous. As he and Adam looked on, their fingers roamed almost of their own accord, touching earlobes, backs of necks and the sides of arms.

“Wow.”

“Yeah.”

If what Adam and Kris had been doing in the back seat on their very first drive from the Grand Canyon Airport could be called making out, then this time it was sex with lips. Undisturbed that he’d probably need a week’s worth of chapstick when he got home, Kris ran his hands through Adam’s hair as they did everything they could inhabit one another without making love, and they only stopped because they were forced to exit the car when they reached the hotel. Dazed and both proudly sporting considerable hard ons, they strolled through the lobby and waved to the lady behind the counter, giggling as she returned the gesture while trying not to look at their crotches.

Two minutes on the elevator and one shocked guest later, the couple emerged still all over each other into the hallway and laughed at nothing while Adam tried to find his key.

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“I guess the bed wasn’t big enough after all,” Kris snickered all wrapped up in Adam and a blanket on the floor.

“Housekeeping is going to kill us,” giggled Adam, “I’ll make sure to leave them a nice tip.”

It was fair to say that the main room looked like a small tornado had ripped through it, sheets, blankets and pillows everywhere, couch cushions pushed out of place, a pile of magazines and newspapers strewn about, and several of those hotel pens and pads of paper littering the carpet.

“We should clean it up…my ma would be horrified if I didn’t.” Can’t lose my manners just because I’m in an expensive place.

“So thoughtful of you,” Adam smiled as he nibbled on Kris’ bottom lip.

“How did I get cum on the back of my neck?” Kris wondered aloud after scratching an itch and bringing his hand back all sticky. He looked at Adam for a moment and then they both burst out laughing.

Room service this time brought them two delicious plates of pasta with Parmesan encrusted halibut and a side of fresh vegetables drizzled in homemade Italian dressing along with a bottle of white wine. They ate naked because they could. “Mmm, strawberries,” Kris said with a little chuckle when he spied a large bowl of them on the cart. “I always wanted to be like Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman.”

“You want to be a woman?” Adam asked, his lips twitching in amusement.

“No, silly, I want to eat strawberries and drink champagne in a fancy hotel like she did,” he laughed.

“Well here’s your chance,” said Adam still looking entertained, no doubt, by the thought of a long legged Kris with bright red curls and stripper boots.

“Oh hush, you,” Kris giggled and went to work on the rest of his meal.

Thirty minutes later the boys were back on the destroyed bed with the bowl of ripe berries and full glasses of bubbly. “Happy Valentine’s Day,” Kris said as they toasted.

“Here’s to many more,” said Adam and they both drank deeply from their goblets. It turned out that strawberries were really just an excuse to be erotic with food. Not complaining. Although Kris was a bit sore from earlier, he wouldn’t mind sucking down his lover mixed with the sweet taste of the red fruit. And so it wasn’t long before they were dragging the plump jewels over each other’s bodies, licking at the juices that flowed from half eaten ones and ruining the sheets as missed droplets of crimson dribbled onto the mattress. Scarlet stained lips around thick straining dicks slurped and sucked until each man fell over the edge in turn and filled the other’s throat with cum milk.

They passed out from raiding the mini bar afterwards and were grateful that they could sleep in the next morning before their flight back home.

Freckles
Kris thought that he’d discovered his favorite freckle months ago. *Guess I was wrong.* He looked at the newly discovered one for another second and then kissed it tenderly. *Maybe I can have two favorites. That one on his bottom lip is just so damn sexy.*

“What the hell are you doing down there?”

“What do you think I’m doing?” Kris smiled cheekily and circled the beauty mark, for that is what he thought they were, with his fingertip.

Adam lifted his head up from the bed and quirked an eyebrow at him. “It looks like you’re playing with my dick,” he smirked.

“Well I’m not,” said Kris resolutely, but trying not to giggle at the same time. “I’m…investigating.” Never before had he actually studied the ones on this part of Adam’s body because he was usually too busy doing other things to it. *Plus they’re so light and there’s not that many of them. Bet no one else has ever appreciated them like I do.*

“Investigating, huh? Finding anything interesting?” Adam asked as he rose up to his elbows and looked down at Kris with amusement.

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I am. You see, this freckle right here…” Kris bent down and licked it a few times, drawing a soft moan from Adam who let his head fall back to expose his long throat. “This one is particularly delicious.” It happened to be positioned right under the rim of the head, which Kris knew from experience was a spot that drove Adam crazy when it was stimulated. Kris licked his lips and went in for another taste, using the tip of his tongue to flicker across the freckle repeatedly for about five seconds.

Adam’s arms gave out and his upper body collapsed on the bed. “More.”

“Oh I see, now you don’t mind my playing, is that right?” Kris teased, giving the base of his boyfriend’s length a quick squeeze with the hand that was holding it steady.

“Fuck…more…” came the reply in a husky tone, Adam’s fingers curling and uncurling into his palms.

_God I love seeing him like this. So open, vulnerable…wanting._ Feeling more than a little mischievous, Kris made his tongue into a point and touched it lightly to the freckle, twice, and grinned like a fool when Adam’s cock jumped.

“Angel,” he breathed, sounding almost pained, digging his heels into the mattress and arching his torso into the air.

“Hold still or I won’t be able to reach it,” Kris chuckled and pushed his lover’s hips back down with one hand. “Wouldn’t want that now, would we?” A tiny whimper sounded from above, but it only spurred Kris on to further evil. He gripped the freckle’s home with both hands so that only the head was exposed and then set about making Adam writhe and pant with pleasure as he lapped and sucked at it. Little beads of pre-cum leaked from the slit into Kris’ waiting mouth and still he didn’t cease his torture.

Adam’s chest rose and fell rapidly, a string of nonsense sounds mixed with moans and curses
streaming from his lips until Kris pumped him once and he came hard with a shout.

Kris opened his mouth wide and caught it all on his tongue like warm rain on a hot summer day.

“Punk.”

“Love you, too, baby,” snickered Kris after swallowing down all the cum and wiping his mouth.

“Just for that, I’m making you pack all my knick knacks.”

Chapter 46

“Oh god…Kris…yesss…faster…” Adam was so close. He could feel it gathering as he pumped his dick furiously while Kris thrust into him with ever increasing speed.

Wha? Adam sat bolt right up in bed, panting hard with his hand and stomach a mess of cum. *Shit. Second time this week.* He flopped back down and tried to get his breathing under control. *Fuck fuck fuck. That’s exactly right, that’s what you want, admit it.* Adam did want it, so badly that his unconscious was regularly torturing him with delicious images of Kris’ toned, sweaty body pounding into him until he came his brains out. He shivered and felt his spent length move at the mere thought of the dream. *Stop thinking about it.* But that was much easier said than done because damn those images were just so fucking pretty, and Adam was fairly sure that if he didn’t get out of bed that instant he’d end up masturbating again, consciously this time. Not that he minded, but he was still wrestling with his feelings about bottoming and hadn’t come to a firm conclusion yet. Heaving a little sigh as if he were giving up a delectable treat, he got out of bed and went to wash up in the bathroom.

The main problem was that Adam was scared he’d have a flashback and he didn’t want that to happen during such an intimate moment with Kris. *It’s going to hurt, you know it will. Damn… where are all my towels? I swear I left some out.* He wiped his wet hands on his sleep pants and padded over to a box marked with neon orange stickers, one saying ‘Bathroom’ and the other ‘Sheets and Towels.’ Fortunately he’d been smart enough not to tape that one up and he reached in and pulled out a single blue hand towel and a matching bath towel for when he got home from the gym later. It was Friday, which meant that he only had a few hours to workout, get home and shower before Kris and Alisan came over to help him finish packing for the big move tomorrow.

He dried off his stomach and looked at his pale face in the mirror, brows creased into a sharp ‘v’. Adam was well aware that the ‘first’ time would be painful at least to some extent and that he’d be sore afterwards. *Might as well be my first after so long. Maybe I should prep myself with a dildo or something.* God, I can’t believe I’m even considering this. It’d been a given for so long that no one would ever enter him again, and now… it was odd and a little scary to be actually contemplating going through with it. And then he remembered the exquisite feeling of his boyfriend’s cock rubbing hot on his hole and knew it was only a matter of time before he gave into the fantasy. *Mmmmm…so sexy….so…wait…* Something horrible was sniffing around the edges of his mind, maybe because he’d been thinking about pain and Adam could sense it lurking, just waiting for the right moment to strike. No. Go away. It won’t be like that… it won’t. Go away!… fuck… breathe… calm down… I’m safe… I’m… no… Whispering cruel voices and nightmarish fragments of scenes crept towards him and then began to ooze into Adam’s brain like a swarm of red ants, biting and pinching at the neurons.
It wasn’t always like this. Of course, with the exception of Sam’s first escape two years ago, Adam hadn’t had many flashbacks at all in the last eight years because he’d managed to successfully use sex, social isolation and control to deal with triggers. But now that he was in a relationship and purposefully trying to face his fears, it was like stepping into a boxing ring. Occasionally he had no warning at all and found himself unexpectedly ‘knocked out’ and transported back in time, forced to re-experience bits and pieces of his trauma until something mysterious said he could be done suffering. Sometimes the flashbacks were mild enough opponents – or he was strong enough – that he could easily dismiss them, but not this one. This one seemed to be hell bent on fighting him tooth and nail in a dirty match.

Sheila said he was eventually supposed to make peace with them - to look at them, know they aren’t real, shake hands and walk away, but that was a heck of a lot easier to do when someone was around to help him, to remind him of what was real right in front of his face. What he wanted most of all was to never be triggered in the first place, but that would take time and lots of practice. True, he was making very good progress there, but that didn’t prevent these episodes from occurring once in a while.

Trying not to panic because he knew it would make things worse, Adam quickly turned on the cold water and splashed his face a few times, but it wasn’t working.

“I’m safe…no one is hurting me… I’m…” he whimpered to nobody, and nobody answered. Familiar faces began to loom into view, twisted and mocking. No! I can do this! He scurried into the kitchen and hastily pulled open the freezer door, but the ice trays were already packed up. In this state of mind there was no way he’d get to them quick enough, and the idea of making ice right now was ridiculous anyway, so he blindly stuck his hands into the cold and pressed them against the freezer wall. It’s not real…the cold is real…feel the cold…feel… Too late. The skin on his palms that was stuck to the icy surface could not keep him standing, and he slumped to the floor as the memories finally won out.

“NOOO! BASTARDS! GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME! GET OFF ME YOU SHITS! GODDAM PIECES OF--

And suddenly the criminals were gone. Adam opened his eyes and saw that he was on his kitchen floor and not on the beach after all, but his entire body was quaking and sweating as if he’d just had the fight of his life and come out of it badly beaten up but victorious in the end. He was exhausted, and even though he wanted nothing more than to celebrate the fact that he’d just yelled at his attackers instead of begging them to stop, it seemed that he was only going to win one battle today.

“B-bastards…you l-little shits…” he stuttered through trembling lips as he began to weep, curling in on himself and trying to resist the urge to call Kris so they could have sex to erase the pain. I don’t do that anymore, remember? Go with the sadness. His nose started to run but he didn’t care because he had to concentrate on not getting up and darting for the phone. For some reason this one had really knocked him on his ass and he felt like a crack addict without a fix, withdrawal ripping through his body and mercilessly shouting at him to use. Arms tightly wrapped around his knees, Adam cried and swore under his breath with a stream of unintelligible curses, simultaneously letting out his anger and grief.

A soft knock came at his door. Adam was sure that it was still too early to be Kris, so he ignored it, but whoever it was rapped again and then he heard his door open. There was only one person who had a copy of his apartment key. Shit. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to see his lover, he just had no doubt that it would be even harder to resist sex now. Still weeping softly, Adam didn’t move from his spot on the floor and tried to figure out what to do.
“Baby? Thought we could go to the gym together. Adam where are y…” Kris stopped at the kitchen doorway and gasped before falling to his knees. “Oh my god, are you okay? Are you hurt?” He stretched out his arms but Adam tensed and jerked away.

“No…don’t touch…please,” he choked out as every fiber of his being screamed at him to pin Kris to the floor and use him like a drug. “I don’t want to…I need…” He shuddered violently and clung to his own body, digging black nails into his thighs and squeezing his eyes shut so he would be less tempted.

Kris pulled his hands back, looking confused but not angry. “I won’t touch you if you don’t want me to. Just tell me what to do to help you, okay?” he said calmly.

“G-go in the bedroom…l-lock the door.” It was the only thing he could think of that might work without having to send Kris away completely. “I d-don’t want to use you…p-please.”

Kris’ puzzled expression cleared at once and he nodded and stood up. “I love you. Come get me when you can,” he said and then quickly exited the room as if he understood that the longer he stayed, the more pain he would cause his boyfriend.

Once he was gone, Adam gave his thighs a break and unclenched his fingers. *How is it possible to feel so many things at the same time?* Pride, love, joy, raw need, fear, shame, anger and sorrow. Why couldn’t they all just take turns; didn’t they see how crowded it was getting inside Adam’s brain and heart? Apparently not, because they all began to stomp around with lead feet in an attempt to get his attention until his head was about to burst with the noise. Not surprisingly, the sadness was the loudest and the others gradually submitted to its power, fading into a whisper as Adam’s special ocean swept in shouting its triumph.

He let it.

***

Fifteen minutes later he was at the bedroom door, knocking warily and feeling rather numb, his face slack and eyes puffy. “Kris.”

Kris peeked around the door with his brows raised in question. Adam nodded at him and they understood without speaking that he was ready to be comforted now. With a soft and loving smile, Kris gently took Adam’s hand and walked him to the bed to snuggle.

“Angel?” Adam mumbled into the crook of his lover’s neck, his eyes closed and mind focused on nothing but the feel of Kris’ fingertips skimming up and down his bare back.

“Mmm?”

“I love you.”

“Love you, too,” Kris said with a tender kiss to Adam’s temple, continuing to caress him until his body relaxed completely, safe and warm in Kris’ arms.
“It’s looking good, actually. There’s not a whole lot left to pack except my bookshelves and a few odds and ends,” Adam said, squinting his eyes against the mid-afternoon sun that was pouring into his bedroom. He, Alisan and Kris were taking a much deserved break, splayed out on Adam’s bed after having spent the majority of the day cleaning and packing. “How about we get the books done and then we can go out for pizza?”

“Sounds like a plan,” Alisan replied with yawn. “Ugh, I smell like cleaning chemicals,” she said, pulling a handful of hair up to her nose and sniffing it.

“That’s natural stuff though so it shouldn’t smell too bad. What about you, lover, you up for more packing yet?” Adam seemed to have more energy than the other two, but that was because he’d had a good long nap earlier this morning and had visited Fifi, which always gave him a lift.

Kris groaned a little and stretched his arms above his head, exposing his flat stomach and the tops of his hipbones peeking out above dark blue jeans. “Five more minutes, mom?”

Mmm…pretty hipbones…pretty boy. Focus! Got work to do. Adam leapt up from the bed and rattled them by their ankles. “Come on you lazy asses, I hired you to help me, not sleep,” he said playfully, feeling in remarkably good spirits given how his day had started. I got through it, didn’t I? Plus I’m better now at knowing when I need help. And I yelled at them!

“Oh, are we getting paid?” Alisan smirked, “I wasn’t aware. I want my payment in shoes.”

Adam chuckled and tried pulling them off the bed. “Fine, one pair of shoes.”

“Hey, what about me?” asked Kris, his bottom lip pushed out into an adorable pout.

“You? Hmmm.” He let go of their ankles and climbed up on top of Kris, straddling those gorgeous hipbones and leaning down to whisper in his ear. “You get your payment in blowjobs tonight after Ali goes home…as many as you can handle. Oooh, I felt that, angel,” he hissed as Kris’ dick moved beneath him, “you like the idea of unlimited head, don’t you? I think it’s payback time for that cute little freckle trick you pulled on me.”

A breathy, almost inaudible moan fell from Kris’ lips and he quivered like a guitar string after it had been plucked.

“Are you two quite done, or should I just go home and leave you to pack on your own,” Alisan said with exasperation, rolling her eyes as she got up from the bed, but she giggled then and kicked Adam’s foot.

Adam’s lips twisted up to the side and he glanced back at her. “You want your shoes, don’t you?” he teased. “Come on, baby, let’s hop to it.” He rolled off of an even more reluctant Kris and pulled him up by the hand.

Once back in the living room, the three of them began packing up Adam’s sizable collection of books that he’d gathered over years of spending so much time on his own. Small…medium…large…paperback…hardback. Adam liked to sort books into piles by shape and type because it made for neater packing and used up fewer boxes.
“Well I guess this one won’t fit,” said Kris, sitting cross-legged and trying to shove an oversized volume into a box.

“Oh my god, what are you doing!” Adam exclaimed in horror as he looked at the all the books placed every which way in Kris’ box. He heard Alisan snickering over by the other bookshelf, but he wasn’t concerned about her because she knew how to pack books properly after having helped him move several times.

Kris looked up holding the large hardback in his hands. “What? I’m packing.”

“That’s not packing,” he said, pointing at the offending box, “you’ve got to organize them first like I did, see?”

“Huh?” Kris peered around his box, saw Adam’s carefully stacked piles and his lips twitched before he glanced up. “No problem, I think I can do that.”

“Hmm, are you laughing at me?” he asked suspiciously, noting the barely hidden amusement on his boyfriend’s face. So what if I like things organized? A pesky flick of annoyance buzzed in his ear and suddenly he felt self-conscious about his habits, which was odd because they’d joked easily about other things like how neatly Adam made his bed or organized his kitchen drawers and DVD collection.

“Me? No, not at all, why would I? I mean, it makes perfect sense to do it your way,” Kris said seriously as if trying to assure Adam, but he was doing a poor job at it because his eyes were sparkling way too much.

Adam knew that Kris probably expected a playful exchange at this point, but for some inexplicable reason, he just couldn’t get into it. He made an attempt at a smile and failed miserably.

Kris’ eyes lost their mirth at once and he rose to his feet. “Really, Adam, it doesn’t bother me. I’ll pack them any way you want,” he said, and this time his voice was truly sincere.

Adam ran his hands through his hair, trying to swallow the irritation that was bubbling up in his throat. “No, I mean yes, I mean…fuck.”

“You know what,” said Alisan suddenly, “I think I’ll just go and get us some pizza right now, alright? I know what you like, puppy…Kris, how about you?”

“Umm…I…” he threw her a look that clearly said he was caught off guard by Adam’s behavior and wasn’t really thinking about pizza. “I don’t care, just nothing with anchovies.”

She nodded smartly, grabbed her purse and headed out the door without another word. God bless her. Honestly, she always knows. A whispy veil of awkward silence hung in between the couple, something that rarely, if ever, happened and certainly not since they were first getting to know each other. It lasted for about ten seconds, both of them looking at the ground and fidgeting until Kris stepped through the invisible curtain.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” he said as he moved closer, “I didn’t mean to make fun, really, I was just--”

“No, it’s fine, I don’t care. I’m not even sure why I’m annoyed to be honest,” Adam replied with a heavy sigh, wishing that feelings didn’t have to be so damn complicated all the time.
Kris walked around a few books and tugged Adam to his body until they were hugging. “You know, stuff like this might happen sometimes, but it’s okay.”

Adam pulled back a little so he could see his boyfriend’s face. “What do you mean, stuff like this?”

“Well, we’re going to be living together twenty-four seven, and there’s bound to be things that bother us and–”

“Shit, that’s it.” That’s what’s pissing me off. He withdrew from the embrace and went to sit on the part of the couch that wasn’t crowded with packing materials. When Kris had said that he was ready to move in together, Adam had imagined that somehow it would be immediate, that Kris would come home with him from Arizona and never leave. Impractical, yes, but that’s how he wanted it to be nonetheless. He didn’t want to wait for Matt to find a roommate. He’d already told Kris that he wouldn’t have to pay two rents and he could just stay with Adam for free, but Kris wouldn’t agree to it, saying that he needed to feel like an equal partner and contributor.

“What’s it?” Kris asked, coming over and trying sit next to him in the small space that was left on the couch, but Adam just pulled him onto his lap.

“I’ve waited for so long…been so patient,” he said as he rested his forehead on Kris’ shoulder. “I want you to live with me now. I want you to be already packed and putting your stuff in my…our new apartment. I want Fifi,” he said sadly. The fact that the puppy would still be staying at his parents’ house was Adam’s fault, however, because he’d decided she should be there until Kris was actually moved in with him. It just feels right that way. We’re all supposed to be together at the same time. He knew he was being foolish and stubborn about that, but he couldn’t help it. That’s the way it was supposed to be.

Adam felt fingers pressing under his chin as Kris lifted it upwards until blue eyes met brown. “It’s not going to be long,” said Kris with a soft smile. “Matt is already in touch with a few interested guys and before you know it, you’ll be yelling at me to get all my crap picked up off the floor,” he chuckled and touched a gentle kiss to Adam’s lips. Patience was not one of Adam’s best qualities, and although he understood Kris’ reasons for waiting, it bugged the hell out of him that he still had to endure days of waking up alone.

“Will you at least spend the first night with me in the new apartment tomorrow?” he asked, hugging his boyfriend tightly around the waist and thinking about how empty it would feel without Kris there.

“Of course I will, I always spend Saturday nights with you anyway, silly.” Kris adjusted himself so that he was straddling Adam instead of sitting sideways on his lap. “So how long do you think Ali will be gone?” he asked suggestively, pushing his knees back into the couch so that their groins were touching.

Adam’s frown turned up into a smirk and he cupped Kris’ ass firmly. “You always know how to put me in a good mood, but the pizza place is only a block away. I’m sure she’ll be back soon. But,” he said as he twined his hands into brown hair and drew that pretty mouth closer, “that shouldn’t stop us from having a hot make out session.”

“Definitely not,” Kris murmured against Adam’s lips.
By seven o’clock, they were finally done. Every step echoed off the bare walls as Adam walked around his apartment to make sure he hadn’t missed anything. He’d be picking up the truck tomorrow morning and he wanted to spend a relaxing evening with Alisan and Kris without worrying. He spotted two boxes of knick-knacks and giggled at the memory of Kris packing them and sulking.

“Well, that should do it,” he said when he finished his tour and returned to the living room.

Kris and Alisan were lounging on the couch and armchair respectively and looked as beat as Adam felt. “I’m starving,” said Kris, re-crossing his legs on Adam’s coffee table, “aren’t you?”

“We just had pizza,” Alisan said from her curled up spot on the chair, “how can you be hungry again?”

“That was three hours ago. A growing boy needs his food,” he responded and held out his hand to Adam, who took it and sat on the arm of the couch while Alisan snorted at Kris.

Growing huh? I’ve only seen one part of him ‘grow’ recently. Chuckling quietly to himself, Adam squeezed his boyfriend’s hand and kissed it. “How about we go downtown and get some ice cream? It’s warm out tonight and I’ve got a craving.”

“You always have a craving for ice cream, puppy, but I’m game. Maybe the walk will wake me up a little. I’m supposed to meet Matt later tonight.”

“Don’t keep him up too late, Ali, I need him rested to help me and Kris with the heavy furniture tomorrow.” He got a huff and an intimidating look for that.

The trio hauled themselves up and set out into the unseasonably balmy night, strolling leisurely and stopping every once in a while when Alisan saw some pretty shoes in window displays or Adam spotted an eye-catching jacket or jewelry.

In Adam’s opinion, there was no better place in LA for good homemade ice cream than Micky and Sam’s, which had been renamed to Ice Cream Plus a while back, but Adam liked the old name better. Although he tried to watch what he ate, he really couldn’t stand frozen yogurt, gelato and low fat crap, and while Micky and Sam’s served those items, what Adam loved most was the real thing complete with whole milk and sugar. Plus they have sandwiches and other food that Kris can get if he wants. Even though the shop was located in a strip mall, it had still managed to retain it’s local mom and pop feel from many years ago, which was another reason Adam liked it so much.

After Kris wolfed down a tuna salad sandwich that he said was the best he’d ever had, they all left the shop with cones of ice cream, Adam with his customary French Silk, Milky Way for Kris and Coconut, Alisan’s favorite. As they ambled down the street licking the sweet cream and joking around, Adam suddenly felt that he had a lot to be grateful for in his life. Yes, he was desperately impatient for Kris to be moved in already, but he trusted that it would happen soon. Things can’t get any better than that, and we’ll have Fifi, too. He put his left arm around his lover’s waist and stuck it in his back pocket.

Kris looked up at him, grinned widely and did the same.
“I think I might get cavities from how cute you two are together,” Alisan said with a genuine smile, and Adam knew that she was ridiculously happy for him after all the years he’d been alone and isolated.

The two lovers beamed at each other and they all continued to walk, finishing up their desserts until Adam noticed a particularly stunning jacket artfully displayed in a window. “Wow…fucking gorgeous,” he said, staring in awe at the gold and black distressed leather, zippers, and detailed stitching. “Looks like hand stitching…damn, that’s some quality work.” He backed up to see the sign above the shop and hitched a smile when he saw it was the same clothing designer that he’d seen on the news on his birthday. “Do you guys mind if we go in and check it out?” he asked Alisan and Kris, who both said they didn’t.

They were just about to go in when Kris froze in place with a stunned expression on his features, gaping at a man approaching the small group. “Holy shit…no way.”

“Kris? What’s the matter?” “Something is not right here. “Who is that?” he asked with a note of concern in his voice, because he did not like the anxiety that was creeping into his boyfriend’s eyes.

Kris glanced at the shop quickly and then back at the tall, blonde, handsome man as if deciding whether or not to flee. “It’s…Ethan…but…but…I thought he moved to Oregon…I…”

“You mean the fucker who cheated on you twice and then dumped you?” Adam said, suddenly furious and hoping that the guy would keep on coming so that he could punch him in the face. Alisan stepped in front of the couple and put her hands on her hips, making her seem like a stern mother about to lecture her children. “Look, I don’t know the whole story here, but Adam, you look like you’re ready to strangle that dude. Maybe you and I should go inside and let Kris deal with this.”

“No way, Ali!” he said angrily and pulled Kris to his side, but then he remembered the incident with Brian and how he’d tried to handle things for Kris. That was a total disaster. He took a huge breath and attempted to subdue the beast in his chest demanding Ethan’s head on a platter, but his words came out through gritted teeth. “Angel, do you want me to go inside?”

“No. Stay here with me but don’t hurt him, okay?” Kris said with no inflection whatsoever. “I don’t care about him, but I don’t want you to get arrested.” He peered up at Adam and there was definitely worry in those beautiful brown eyes, but also steely flecks of determination. Adam remembered Kris telling him how this idiot seemed to have some kind of power to make Kris keep coming back no matter what the jerk did. You’ve got to let him face this on his own…you know he needs to. Adam pressed a firm kiss to Kris’ temple and said, “Fine, I won’t hurt him unless he attacks me, or you.” The bastard, I hope he does take a swing at me.

“You’ve got to let him face this on his own…you know he needs to. Adam pressed a firm kiss to Kris’ temple and said, “Fine, I won’t hurt him unless he attacks me, or you.” The bastard, I hope he does take a swing at me.

“Thank you. Just be here for me,” he said, but continued to allow himself to be pinned to Adam’s side.

“See Ali, it’s fine,” Adam said to her. She frowned anyway and walked into the shop.

Ethan walked with a confident strut that made Adam’s jaws tighten and his fingers press possessively into Kris’ left hip. Dirty blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail, bright blue eyes and a tall, fit form, the man stopped about five feet from Kris and Adam. “Hey sweetie, I thought that was you. Who’s this guy?” he asked casually, as if Adam were of no importance despite the fact that the couple was
practically hugging.

“Don’t call me that,” Kris snapped, “and this is Adam, my boyfriend. What do you want?”

You go, angel!

“You’re with him?” he asked sounding surprised, as if Kris shouldn’t be able to get a man like that. He looked Adam up and down and raised his eyebrows in appreciation.

*Kris could have any man he wanted. What a rude little fucker! “That’s right,” Adam said smugly, unable to hold his tongue, “you got a problem with that?”*

Ethan sneered in response, stepped a foot closer to Kris and adopted a sickeningly sugary tone like bait intended to trap the unsuspecting victim. “Hmm, well now that I’m back in town, I was actually planning to look you up, sweetie,” he said, completely ignoring another angry protest from Kris at the term, “but I rather expected you to be single, and certainly not with a guy like this.”

It was too much for Adam, but since he’d promised not to get violent he did the next best thing and spat at the asshole’s feet, his face twisted in disgust. A storm of outrage brewed in Ethan’s eyes and he moved into a combative stance.

*Bring it, bitch.*

“No.” Kris shrugged out of Adam’s hold, huffed once through his nose, and thrust his jaw forward at his ex-boyfriend. “Adam, go inside please,” he said calmly without turning his head.

“What? But…” Adam clenched his fists in frustration, praying for the patience he needed to do as Kris asked. He bared his teeth and snarled at the man who’d been so cruel to his sweet lover. “If you so much as lay a finger on him…”

“Adam. Go.” Still glaring at Ethan, Kris had his arms crossed and was wearing an expression so harsh that it rivaled the stare Adam had given the check-in lady at the hotel in Arizona.

*Well he can probably take care of himself…he’s pretty damn strong.* Biting back any further protests and insults he’d been about to hurl at blondie, Adam turned heel and stomped into the clothing shop. As soon as he got in however, he whipped around to watch the exchange through the window. Kris’ mouth grew thinner and thinner and Adam could see a dark flush of anger rising up his boyfriend’s neck while Ethan was talking. “Kick him, angel, tell that bastard off,” he whispered fiercely.

“Ahem.”

“Ha,” he puffed out when Kris started to yell at Ethan. *That’s right, you show him, baby.*

“A-hem!”

“What Ali? I’m kind of busy right now,” he said briskly, continuing to observe with rising glee at his brave man standing up for himself.

“Yes, I can see that, but don’t you think you’re being a little rude?”

*Huh?* Adam turned around and saw Alisan tapping her foot with her head tilted in the direction of the employee that was standing behind the counter looking confused. “Oh, uh sorry,” he grumbled
and returned to his post. He heard a sigh and then Alisan was pulling on his elbow. “Hey!”

“He’s fine, Adam, come over here. I want to introduce you,” she said, dragging him toward the counter.

*Introduce me? What do I care who he is and why does she care?* He dug his heels into the gray carpet and refused to budge another inch. “What are you doing?” he hissed in irritation at her, casting a quick glance back at Kris, who looked to be in the middle of a heated argument with Ethan.

“I’m helping you get a day job,” she said impatiently. “This would be the perfect place for you and they have a position open.”

*Well that was unexpected.* Alisan tugged on him again but he still didn’t move. “This isn’t a good time,” he said, trying and failing to keep his voice down, “we should talk about this later.”

“Come on, puppy, you—”

“No. Later,” he insisted and by the way that her shoulders drooped, he knew he had won.

“Oh wow! That guy just knocked that other guy right to the ground!” exclaimed the employee, pointing out the shop window.

“Kris!” Adam tore his arm from Alisan’s grip and ran out the door, but it wasn’t his angel unconscious on the cement. His mouth fell open a little as he took in the blood trickling from Ethan’s nose. “Holy fuck!” With his peripheral vision he could see Kris rubbing his knuckles and smirking.

“He wouldn’t stop calling me sweetie.”

*Hot.*

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The normally soft smacking of the two men’s kissing lips echoed and reverberated like small pieces of tin being thrown at the naked walls, but it didn’t hinder them in the least. Bare bodies entwined, their hands snaking over hard muscle and curving flesh, Adam and Kris were trying to make the most of their last night in this apartment. Already Adam’s finger was deep into Kris’ tight hole, sliding in and out as they writhed against each other.

“Such a bad ass…so fucking sexy,” Adam breathed huskily into Kris’ ear while continuing to finger fuck him, relishing every moan and hitching breath that came out of that luscious mouth. “So wild…dangerous,” he hissed, knowing that these kinds of words were extremely arousing for Kris. *Plus they’re true.* He curled his finger sharply and pulsed it into exactly the right spot. “Unpredictable…fucking brave…”

Groaning and panting, Kris suddenly rolled them and pinned Adam to the bed with his hands. Chest heaving and eyes glazed over with scorching raw want, he stretched Adam’s arms above his head and bent down, milky way breath falling hot on freckled lips. “Want to…fuck you…help…” he growled, his biceps trembling with restraint that was clearly about to crumble.

*Oh shit.* In a flash Adam flipped them and quickly slithered down to take Kris all the way into his
mouth. It took about a millisecond of sucking before Kris grabbed Adam’s head and started bucking his hips rapidly. Adam let his mouth be fucked by his needy lover and tightened his throat and lips as hard as possible to simulate the feeling Kris was looking for, but the hazardous man was clearly frantic at this point and Adam could tell it wasn’t enough.

Although he’d suffered severe damage to his mouth and throat during his trauma, for some reason, giving Kris blow jobs never seemed to trigger Adam even when he was deep throating. Maybe it was because he’d started off so slow and had been in control of the process the entire time until it felt completely comfortable. Got it. Once again he turned them over, only this time he pulled Kris by the hips towards his face and opened his mouth as wide as it would go. Kris quickly got the hint, scrambled forward on all fours and began thrusting his cock hard and fast down Adam’s throat. “Yes yes yes…” he chanted with every snap of his hips.

Adam took it all in, breathing heavily through his nose with tears streaming down the sides of his face from Kris’ cock triggering his gag response over and over. He brought his hands up and wrapped them around the base tightly, causing his lover to gasp and throw his head back. “Adam! Oh god…yes!” he huffed as he sped up, an untamed, relentless animal raging with the instinctual need to fuck. Adam felt Kris’ knees trembling against his ribcage and knew he was close; with the last bit of energy remaining in his aching jaws, Adam clamped down and sucked as hard as he could.

“Oh fuck!” Kris shouted with one more slam. Adam barely tasted the cum that pumped down the back of his throat, just a hint of his boyfriend’s essence on his tongue as he swallowed and swallowed, massaging Kris’ cock to get every last drop.

After series of short, hoarse grunts Kris collapsed onto his side and shivered from head to toe.

“Oh Angel,” Adam croaked and spooned around his boyfriend despite the pain pulsing through his rigid shaft. That had been blazing hot in a way that Adam never imagined it could be and he didn’t quite understand why, but it didn’t matter right now; his only concern at the moment was if he’d satisfied Kris sufficiently since he couldn’t give him the real thing yet.

“Oh Adam, I’m so sorry,” said Kris unexpectedly as his breathing slowed down. “I didn’t mean to do that…I got carried away.” He rolled over and saw the tear tracks on Adam’s face. “Did I hurt you? I’m so…”

“Shhhhhhh.” Adam shook his head, smiled warmly and pressed a single kiss to Kris’ lips to stop him from apologizing. “Was it good?” he asked in a cracked whisper.

“You’re okay?” Kris asked, seemingly determined to make absolutely sure, and when Adam nodded he visibly relaxed and sighed in relief. “Hell yeah it was good. More than good, fucking fantastic! You’re amazing, you did that for me…I can’t believe it,” he said fervently, wiping any remaining wetness from Adam’s face with his thumbs.

Hushed syllables formed together to release the words into the tiny gap between their mouths, “love you, angel.”

Kris’ eyes danced with love as he returned the sounds and erased the space separating them with his mouth. “Adam, let me take care of you now,” said Kris.

Oh thank god. Adam couldn’t deny that he was in real pain now and he gratefully flopped onto his back, eager for Kris to relieve the ache. However, he was not expecting what happened next. After giving Adam a quick but out of this world blow job, Kris got up and retrieved some lube from the
dresser drawer. Wonder what he’s got in mind?

“Bend your knees, baby,” he said as he poured lube on his fingers.

_Oh yessss. God I love it when he fingers me. Maybe I can get up to three tonight._ He drew up his knees and let them fall open, but Kris didn’t settle in between them. Instead he lay down, put one arm under Adam’s head and reached down with the other.

“Angel…ohhhh.” He was about to mutter another sigh of bliss as a slippery finger pulled out and entered him again, but Kris caught his lips in a tender kiss and Adam suddenly understood that this was his boyfriend’s way of making love. Softly blending their mouths together, Kris kissed him in slow motion andpleasured him with a leisurely rhythm of in and out…in and out…

_Want more skin._ Adam rolled onto his side, stretched his right leg straight and draped his left over Kris’ hips, which prompted Kris to move onto his side, too, so that they were finally face to face. The sounds coming from Adam turned into a sort of humming as they made out and made love, but every once in a while he gasped when he felt Kris’ finger stimulate him, almost caressing the tingling node up inside.

“Two,” he murmured after sucking on Kris’ soft candy bottom lip.

Kris smiled against Adam’s mouth and complied. About five minutes later he asked for three and felt hopeful that he’d be able to accept more than his lover’s fingers soon.

**Chapter 47**

“Hey gal, how you doing tonight?” Kris ran his fingers up and down the strings of his guitar as he sat in his chair and leaned back, feeling the stress of a long Wednesday at work and school ease out of his muscles with the familiar feel of his old friend. He started strumming the song he’d recently finished on his demo and suppressed a little giggle of excitement at how close he was to being done. Kris was extremely pleased with the way it had turned out, and he couldn’t wait to give it back to his professor who had promised to pass it on to a friend at Aware Records. _Dang, what if I actually get a record deal?_ He’d been thinking that he really ought to be trying to land some local gigs to get more public exposure, but between work, school and Adam he just couldn’t seem to squeeze it in. _Maybe when we’re living together it’ll be easier to do that…less time going back and forth between apartments._ As he imagined how incredible it would be to have his gorgeous man beside him so often, he couldn’t help but break into a refrain of ‘Good Day Sunshine’ by the Beatles, as corny as that was.

“Hey Kris!”

His fingers came to a sudden halt on the strings. “What Matt?” he yelled back.

“Come in here, got some good news!”

“Why can’t you come here?”

“Because I’m lazy and since I’m the one with good news I know you’ll cave!”
Kris chuckled, put aside his guitar and went to see what all the fuss was about. “Well?” he asked as he leaned against the doorframe of Matt’s bedroom, catching a glimpse of something green on the desk. “What is that thing?”

“It’s a Bonsai tree, no wait, it’s a plant…um tree,” he muttered, looking puzzled and staring at what looked like a miniature tree, sort of. “Ali got it for me when we went to that garden thing.”

Because Kris was a good friend and Matt really liked Alisan, he tried not to laugh at how funny it was that she seemed to be wearing the pants in this relationship already. “Cool,” was all he said. “So what’s the big news?”

“Oh yeah! I just got off the phone with this guy who wants your room.”

“Seriously? That’s awesome!”

“Yes, poor guy has been crashing on his boss’ couch for a while,” said Matt. “He lost his old place when the landlord went bankrupt and kicked everyone out without any notice.”

“Damn, that sucks!” said Kris emphatically.

“For real. Anyway he’s just itching to move and get his stuff out of storage. He’s got a steady job with a clothing designer downtown so he’s ready to pay a month’s rent up front.”

Kris felt his heart start to thump rapidly in his chest at the fact that this was all really going to happen. “That’s fantastic! When can he move in?”

Matt put his feet up on the desk and stretched his arms into the air, looking smug as the secret keeper of the information that Kris was so desperate to know. “Wellllll…”

“I’ll hurt you, you know I can,” said Kris in jest, although he wasn’t above playing dirty if he had to, but thankfully his roommate just winked and said, “Saturday.”

“You mean this Saturday?” he asked and when Matt nodded he actually jumped off the ground a little, “Oh my god! Yes! Wooohoooo!!” Kris couldn’t remember ever being more excited as he punched the air and celebrated. “I have to start packing! Holy shit! And I’ve got to call Adam’s parents and change my address and…and…fucking awesome! This is sooo cool!”

“Didn’t realize I was that hard to live with,” snickered Matt, but his eyes were twinkling in obvious happiness for Kris.

Once he’d hugged Matt until being shoved away, Kris raced back into his bedroom, full of energy and darting around like Fifi when she was wound up, throwing things on his bed to pack and then putting them back because he didn’t have any boxes yet. “Gotta get boxes from work tomorrow,” he said aloud and then tried to settle down, but it was terribly difficult because he was so damn giddy and he really wanted to call Adam to tell him. No, stick with the plan, it’s only two days away and it’ll be perfect. But he suddenly thought of a serious problem with all of this. How the hell am I going to pack everything in one evening? The guy is going to be here on Saturday and I have to be completely out by then. Shit. The good thing was that most of the living room furniture belonged to Matt and he wouldn’t need to take his bed. What if the new guy already has a bed though? And what about my piano! There was only one way he could think of to fix this.
Hoping that it wasn’t too late to call, Kris phoned two of his friends from school that he’d been meaning to hang out with, feeling a little guilty that he was asking for help after neglecting them for months. Four guys, Jason’s old pick up…it’s got to work…I’ll just donate my bed to Goodwill or something and come back for the piano later. I’m sure they won’t mind. Sean wasn’t too thrilled at being blown off but he still agreed to come over tomorrow. Most importantly, however, Jason was only too happy to help and said Kris could use the truck as long as he wanted since it’d just been sitting around in his dad’s yard. The best he could offer in exchange was free dinner and promises to not to abandon them again.

He was relieved when he’d finally arranged everything and took some time to settle down before Adam was due to call. As he lay on his bed in a pair of plaid boxer shorts, Kris thought about friendship and how things had gone when Matt had helped Adam move last Saturday. Adam had admitted to Kris that it felt strange and uncomfortable to have Matt in his apartment even for a short time and he pretty much booted him and Alisan out the moment that the last box was in. However, the two of them seemed to be getting along and enjoying each other’s company nonetheless. It’s just going to take time for him to trust…huh? His phone was chiming with the sound of a new text message. Thinking that it must be Adam, he reached over to his nightstand and picked it up.

Crap. ‘Kris, u said u would call me sometime.’ Fuck. Brian. He’d completely forgotten about the kid, but he didn’t think he was in the right frame of mind to talk to him right now. Plus Adam would be calling soon, so he shot back a reply. ‘sorry. wil call tomrw on lunch break.’ Surely that would be good enough, but damn that boy was nothing if not persistent. ‘can I meet u 4 lunch instead?’ Crap, crap, crap, crap. ‘not sure that’s a good idea.’ He was positive that Adam hadn’t contacted him about the mentoring yet, but another interaction with Brian would just be trouble. ‘why not?’ came the response. Better just be honest with him. ‘can’t mentor u anymore. think u’ve got the wrong idea about me.’ Hoping that was a clear enough message, Kris tried to relax his tight grip on the phone as he waited for Brian’s reply. ‘I know ur w Adam. I need help. please.’ Kris groaned out loud because this was really putting a damper on his happy mood. Maybe if I meet with him, I can explain things better and try to get him to agree to being mentored by Adam. I’ll be at work…we’ll be in the food court. I can handle that. ‘fine. meet me at mall food court at noon. not changing my mind tho.’ It was almost thirty seconds before Brian messaged back. ‘ok.’

Tomorrow was going be one hell of a day between that and packing like a mad man when he got home from work, and Kris was annoyed at the kid for deflating his balloon of joyful energy. Should I tell Adam about Brian? His stomach twisted into pretzel knots just imagining how unpleasant that conversation would be, but not saying anything would feel like lying. Why did he have to text me today of all days? Yep, and there’s Adam calling me. With a sigh he answered the phone, rolled onto his stomach and propped up onto his elbows. “Hey, baby.”

“Hey yourself! How’s my gorgeous man today?” Adam chirped.

Kris smiled at Adam’s upbeat tone and could clearly picture his beautiful face stretched into a grin. “Better now. I miss you,” he said, feeling a bit of his former cheerfulness return and thinking that soon he wouldn’t have to miss Adam anymore.

“I miss you, too, angel. Did you have a rough day?”

“Eh, work was long and class was kind of boring, but…” He really didn’t want to burst Adam’s bubble. Just get it out and over with. “…when I got home tonight I got a text message from your cousin.” Kris cringed a little, waiting for Adam to get upset, but all he heard was the rustling of bedcovers on the other end. “Adam?”
“I’m here,” he said quietly, and Kris frowned at hearing the somber tone coming across the line. “So what did he want?”

Kris’ words came out rushed as if that would help somehow. “Well, he wanted to remind me that I hadn’t called him like I said I would, and then I said I’d call tomorrow during lunch, but he wasn’t happy with that I guess. He said he really needed help and asked to meet me for lunch at the mall. I said I would, but only to encourage him to agree to be mentored by you and I made it really clear that I wasn’t going to do it anymore.” *Stop acting like you have something to be sorry about. You’re a grown up and you made this decision.*

There was another significant pause accompanied by the sound of Adam’s steady breathing. “Oh. Well…good luck with that,” he replied in such a way that Kris could tell he was gritting his teeth and probably biting back complaints.

“Thanks. I’ll, um, tell him to expect a call from you?”

“Yeah, sure,” said Adam flatly.

_Fuck. I hate this._ Because of their talk after the time Brian came to Adam’s apartment, Kris understood what was bothering his boyfriend and knew that it wasn’t easy to just be okay with everything right away. “Adam, it’ll be fine,” he said, trying not to sound apologetic while offering reassurance at the same time. “We’ll be in the food court and it’ll probably be like twenty minutes. If he tries to come on to me, well, you saw what I did to Ethan,” he said lightly in an attempt to inject some humor into the conversation. _I did kick ass though…so awesome…he fucking deserved it, the little prick._

Adam chuckled softly which made Kris’ heart lift. “That is true, you are quite fierce,” Adam agreed with a bit more levity, “and I trust you, so let’s not talk about it anymore, okay?”

“You got it,” Kris responded, grinning and wiggling his butt a little just because he did that sometimes when he was happy. “So how about you, what’s new since I talked to you twenty-four hours ago?”

“Oh yeah I was going to tell you! You should have seen Fifi today!” Adam suddenly squeaked in a high-pitched voice, “she did the cutest thing ever! So I was playing with her, right, and she went after that really big rubber ball we got her…”

_He is so freakin’ cute!_

“…and she usually just pushes it around but this time she bit it! She like opened her mouth really, really wide and then her jaws got stuck on the ball! She couldn’t get it out, oh my god it was sooo funny and cute and I was laughing so hard, trying to help her and all but she wouldn’t sit still, she just kept running around and shaking her head!”

Kris let out a hearty laugh, more at how adorable Adam was than at the puppy’s antics. “How did she finally get it out?” he asked in amusement, envisioning the little dog with a huge purple ball in her mouth and Adam chasing her around.

“I finally caught her and mom had to pry her mouth open,” he chortled. “Poor thing, she didn’t go near that ball the whole rest of the time I was there.”

They both chuckled together, Kris thinking about all the good times they were about to share. _Only_
two more days! “You are so sweet, baby.”

“Sweet, huh?” said Adam as his giggles faded, “what about sexy?”

“Mmm, definitely that, too,” he hummed, wiggling again only this time for a different reason.

“Yeah? Tell me, angel, tell me why I’m sexy,” Adam said, sounding breathy and a little aroused.

Interesting. “That will be ridiculously easy, lover. Let’s see, first of all, there’s your eyes,” he began, rolling onto his back and splaying out on the bed. “They’re beautiful and they change colors sometimes. When you’re really turned on they get dark…it’s so hot, like you’re trying to fuck me with them.”

A soft murmur of a moan floated into Kris’ ear. “Keep going,” Adam whispered.

Oooh, a new kind of phone sex…I like. “Thick, black hair that’s perfect for tugging on when you suck me down, lips stretched tight around my cock…mmm…” Without thinking Kris sucked on a finger and started thumbing and pinching his nipples.

Adam groaned and his breathing became heavier. “Yessss…more.”

Kris closed his eyes and began to get lost in the imagery of Adam between his legs, gripping his thighs and teasing him with a wicked smile. “So hot…so good and your tongue…oh baby that long tongue of yours drives me crazy when you lick me over and over, stick it deep inside me, lick your cum right out of my hole…”

Both men were panting into the phone now, blowing warm, lusty air across the distance separating them. “Kris…don’t stop…” The rhythmic sound of his angel bracelet jangling was a horny yet beautiful melody that only heightened the eroticism of the moment.

After licking his lips several times, Kris reached down and rubbed circles into his erection, shifting the blue and red plaid with every stroke. “Long fingers…sliding into me…touching…fucking…oh god, Adam…” he moaned and shuddered as he shoved his hand into his shorts. He could almost feel his boyfriend’s breath on his skin, hot and moist along the curve of his collarbone. “Hard, you’re so hard for me, push it in, baby…”

“No…yours…want you to tell me…how it feels…fuck me, angel…”

Oh jesus. Kris knew that he’d come in about a second with that imagery and he pulled his hand from his boxers abruptly so he could make it last longer. His lungs were starting to feel fiery and Adam’s request was only making it worse. Breathe…tell him how it would be for real. “Slow it down, lover, slowly now…I’d open you up so gently, lovingly…”

Adam whimpered and his voice cracked as he whispered, “touch me.”

“I’m touching you,” he answered, squeezing his closed eyes tightly because the vulnerability and want in Adam’s voice was almost too much, “…caressing your chest, your stomach, your thighs… I’ve got lube on my fingers, gonna slide them deep inside…get you ready for me…”

Adam seemed to be beyond words at this point, no doubt rendered speechless by his fantasy playing out in his imagination. Only ragged gasps and snippets of words flooded Kris’ ear, driving him crazy along with the pictures in his mind. Adam all laid out for him, knees pulled back…open…waiting.
Keep it together. He clenched his fist into the blankets and tried to control his breathing. “Kissing your lips, your tongue…my fingers scissoring you, stretching you slowly…” Kris’ knuckles were starting to ache from gripping the bed so hard, but that was nothing compared to the pain in his dick. It was alive and throbbing, trapped beneath such innocent looking fabric. “I’m all slicked up…in between your thighs.”

A burst of breath and the tiniest of groans fluttered out of the phone and into Kris’ brain where he was lining himself up, about to penetrate that magnificent body for the first time. “Slowly…just the tip pressing against you…then entering you gently…” Kris could see Adam’s startlingly blue eyes, wide, a little apprehensive but trusting, too, and he couldn’t hold back any longer. With his free hand he let go of the blankets and pulled off his boxers to release his leaking cock. He moaned softly as he pulled and stroked himself. “You feel full inside…maybe uncomfortable but it doesn’t hurt… I’m so careful… waiting for you to say go or stop… it’s starting to feel really good now… I’m all the way in, baby.”

“Kris.” The word was strained, barely a whisper, but it was laced with love and longing and it sent shivers up and down Kris’ spine.

“Pulling out of you slowly… then back in… you wrap your legs around me and I’m… kissing you… loving you…” He swallowed thickly, throat dry with desire and he had to slow down his had again… drawing it out. “Pleasure… you can feel it when I slide in… touch that spot every time with my dick… it’s… amazing… you’re so tight, gripping me…”

“Angel… please,” Adam suddenly croaked, and Kris understood that his lover needed to come.

“Faster now… I’m… oh god…” He was starting to come undone. In his mind’s eye Kris began to thrust into Adam, steadily building up speed in time to the motions of his hand, locking eyes with blue mirrors reflecting his love right back into the core of his being. He imagined black nails digging into his flesh, their sweaty bodies moving together in a blaze of passion. Puffs of warm air heated his face as they escaped from his lungs, his hand pumping… faster and faster…

Hoarsely hissed words and noises from Adam’s lips were the telltale signs that he was about to fall over the edge. “Kris… oh… oh… oh!”

“Adam… I’m going to come… right inside you… fill you up… fill you…”

“Angel! Angel! Yes!”

Those sounds shot straight to the center of Kris’ body, a match lighting a rocket that exploded from his shaft leaving a trail of white fuel in its wake. He bit his tongue to muffle his cry and the phone slipped from his sweat-slicked palm. “Fuck… fuck…” he gasped and opened his eyes at last to pick it back up with a trembling hand. “Baby…”

“Oh jesus, that was so… fucking incredible,” Adam wheezed. “I could see everything… so clearly… Kris… I… I want to tell you something.”

Kris thought he knew what was coming; he’d been feeling for a while now that Adam wanted to talk about this, but he didn’t want to be the one to bring it up. Don’t want him to feel pressured. “What is it?” he asked gently, wiping his stomach and hand with his boxer shorts.

They were both still a little out of breath, but Adam’s silence was probably due more to his hesitation to broach the subject. After a few moments, he finally spoke. “I want to do that, for real, but… I’m
scared.” If only the world knew how much bravery was contained in that freckle-kissed man, it would surely demand that everyone rise to their feet and give him a standing ovation.

Kris’ chest constricted in pain at the trepidation he heard in that word, ‘scared.’ I wish he never had to feel fear again. “I know, baby, it’s okay. We don’t have to--”

“I want to, just…I don’t know if I’m ready yet, but Kris…I think it’ll happen at some point…I really do.”

Although he’d been fantasizing about it for a while now, the fact that Adam wanted to make it a reality made his heart throb more than other parts of his body, and Kris knew only one way to respond. “You’re the most courageous person I know. I love you so much,” he said fervently and attempted to nuzzle the phone until Adam complained that all he could hear was the scratching of Kris’ cheek in his ear.

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What on earth was I thinking? Why did I agree to meet him today? I could have picked any freaking day! Kris was panicking a little. It was eleven o’clock and he’d been secretly trying to call or text Brian in between customers for almost an hour to cancel their plans, holding his phone under the counter so he wouldn’t get in trouble. He’d completely forgotten that he’d intended to use his lunch break to go around and collect boxes from various departments today and now he would barely have any time to do so.

Suddenly the phone on his counter sounded with a short ring indicating that an internal call was coming in. Startled, Kris quickly pocketed his cell phone and answered. “Hello?”

“Dude, I can hear you stressing from all the way over here! What the hell is up?”

Kris relayed his dilemma to Matt, craning his body over the counter a bit so he could see his roommate over in the shoe department.

“For cryin’ out loud, calm down, man, I’ll help you out. Just stop looking like you’re about to have a heart attack, alright?”

“You’re a lifesaver!” said Kris gratefully. “I don’t need tons of them, maybe like twenty but try to get a bunch of different sizes. I’ll come help you as soon as I’m done. I already picked up tape and stuff on my way in this morning.”

Matt chuckled and waved from across the store. “Chill, it’s all going to work out fine tonight. It’ll be fun to see Sean and Jason again and we’ll get it all done in time. Okay I gotta run…customers. Catch you later.”

After he hung up, Kris started to reflect on why he’d agreed to Brian’s request so readily, but he didn’t have a lot of time to think about it because it was getting busy in the store. At five minutes to noon, however, it was the first thing that came to mind as he left and made his way to the food court. Damn it. Why should I care about his feelings? Why put them ahead of my own plans? The answer was glaringly obvious. He kicked his foot out at the stale air of the mall, angry with himself about the unconscious slip back into people pleasing. How long is it going to take for me not to do that anymore? Shaking his head irritably as he approached the food court, Kris took a deep breath and
looked around for Brian. There he was, right in the middle of the sprawl of uncomfortable chairs, tables and an overwhelming number of food choices. Alright, you can do this. Just be firm with him.

“Hey Brian,” he said as he came up to the table, “let me just go grab some lunch and I’ll be right back.”

“No problem!” chirped Brian with a wide grin when he saw Kris.

Just keep those eyes to yourself, boy. After a quick run for sushi, he returned and sat across from the young man. “So,” he said as he unwrapped his chopsticks, “I can’t be your mentor anymore and I think you know why, but I still have an idea of how to help you.”

Brian gazed back at him intently, looking as if he were at least making an attempt to hide his obvious attraction to Kris. “I promise that I’ll be good. I’m not trying to get in between you and Adam, really, I just…”

“You can’t seem to help yourself, right?”

“Yes,” he admitted, leaning forward, and Kris could see the beginnings of that burning desire in his eyes.

“What happened to your phone, by the way? I’ve been trying to get in touch with you." Brian flushed a little, confirming Kris’ sudden suspicion that his texts and voicemails had been ignored. He sighed and said, “See? You’re doing it again right now, and that’s exactly why I can’t be the one to mentor you.” He popped a piece of salmon into his mouth, chewing it quickly and swallowing.

Brian sat back and shook his head, which did nothing whatsoever to change the possessive way he was staring at Kris. “But…but, I want…”

“No Brian!” Kris said harshly, and then tried to soften his voice. Good though, good. Firm. “I told you already that I’m not changing my mind on this, but you clearly need help, probably more than you realize and that’s why I think Adam should mentor you instead,” he said hastily before he was interrupted.

Now that did have an effect and Brian’s expression changed immediately to one of shock and fear. “What! Are you crazy? He’ll kill me!”

Kris chuckled and waved the chopsticks at him. “No he won’t. It was his idea in the first place. I now it sounds odd, but he’d be way more helpful to you than I would be.”

“H-his idea? But that doesn’t make any sense. He hates me!” Brain exclaimed with wide eyes, his fingers gripping the edges of the table as he gaped at Kris in surprise.

“He doesn’t hate you, you just remind him of himself and that’s why you piss him off so much,” he said a little amused, taking another bite of sushi and watching the kid’s face try to absorb that information, but it was evidently not happening. “Listen, you want help, right?”

A flash of apprehension crossed Brian’s features and he suddenly looked like a small, frightened boy. “Yes. Things are really bad right now,” he said quietly, dropping his gaze to the table. “I got into some trouble at school…got suspended,” he mumbled.

Wonder what he did? “You’ve got to trust me on this. Adam is the one to help, not me, and he’s
willing to even after you behaved like an ass and came onto me right in front of his face.” He took a few hurried bites of his lunch and checked the time.

“I… I don’t know,” said Brian anxiously as he met Kris’ eyes again.

“Well anyway, it’s your choice… just think about it, okay? Adam said he’d be in touch, but regardless of what you decide I will not mentor you, do you understand that?”

The young man hung his head in disappointment, but then he looked up and said with an unmistakable smirk, “can we be friends? Can we hang out?”

Damn, I’m not that attractive.

“Absolutely not. Find someone your own age that’s not involved with anyone. It’s not going to happen, Brian, I’m sorry.”

“Kris… but I want you, I… I can’t explain it, but I feel like I need you… please… no, where are you going?” he asked with a note of desperation as Kris got up and started walking towards the trash can.

“I have to go now, and you really should talk to Adam about this. He can help you… and you should probably be seeing a therapist if you aren’t already,” Kris said sincerely, making eye contact for one more second before leaving him sitting there looking crestfallen and lost.

I can’t fix him, it’s not my job… not my job. He repeated these words to himself all the way back to the store and even had to continue as he went around with Matt to gather up boxes, because it wasn’t easy to break lifelong habits, to quell the voice that said he must do everything in his power to make others happy regardless of the cost. No, not easy at all.

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“I can’t believe it.” Kris looked around at his nearly empty room with boxes piled up against the wall, feeling a little stunned that they’d managed to pull it off. No way we would’ve made it if I packed as neatly as Adam does… takes too long. It was two in the morning and he was dead on his feet. Sean and Jason had just taken off and Matt had already crashed. Exhaustion made him collapse into bed once he’d changed into pajamas, but he suddenly felt the overwhelming need to talk to Adam even though he’d be seeing him the next day. And the next and the one after that and… wow…

Kris got back up, retrieved his phone and brought it to back to bed with him, gazing at Adam’s name and wondering if he should call this late. He really, really wanted to. When he couldn’t bare it anymore, he quickly touched his thumb to the little screen.

After several rings Adam finally picked up. “Hello?” he said sleepily.

“Baby, it’s me,” said Kris with a mixture of regret for waking him and an internal sigh of relief at hearing that familiar voice.

“Kris? You all right?”

“I’m fine, I just really needed to talk to you for some reason. I’m so tired but… I miss your arms wrapped around me,” he pouted. “Sorry I woke you.”

“Awww, it’s okay, you know you can call me anytime day or night,” Adam said, sounding a little more awake now. “You in bed?”
“Yeah.”

“Well just close your eyes then and listen.”

Kris smiled and wiggled down under the covers until they were up to his ears before shutting his eyes.

“You’re all snuggled up and warm in my arms, angel. I’m stroking your hair…your face is pressed against my chest.”

“Hmmm…yeah.” He shifted onto his side and pushed his nose into the pillow, his body starting to relax under the spell of soothing words and images drifting through his mind.

“You’re thinking about nothing except falling asleep with me by your side.”

“Mnhmm.”

“I kiss the top of your head and whisper I love you,” said Adam softly.

“I love you,” Kris murmured and let out a tiny yawn.

“Go to sleep, my sweet angel.”

“M’kay.”
Adam was discovering that he liked to run, fast, and ever since the time he’d torn out of his apartment after screaming at Brian, he’d been alternating running and going to the gym in the mornings. The steady rhythm of his feet on the pavement was a calming concrete heartbeat that seemed to help him think. Today he’d found a quiet residential area and he was currently contemplating the idea of getting a day job. He definitely needed the money because relying on his parents was becoming old very quickly, but he hadn’t been able to find any other singing gigs to supplement his income no matter how hard he’d looked. There’s always that designer’s shop, and Sheila thinks it’s a good idea for me to work with the public. But the thought of that in addition to being in such close contact with other men all day was extremely nerve-wracking. Maybe I should find some place with only female employees. Oddly enough, however, his mind kept taking him back to that gorgeous jacket he’d seen in the window. So beautiful, such artistry…wonder if the guy Ali tried to introduce me to made it.

It was a clear morning and a little bit chilly out, but the sun was starting to warm things up as it climbed higher in the cloudless sky. Adam was covered in a thin sheen of sweat from head to toe underneath the black jogging pants and navy zip up hoodie that he’d recently purchased. The slightly cool air on his damp forehead and cheeks was invigorating; miniscule cells in his skin woke up and stretched, ready to face a new day. Maybe I’ll just go by there to take a peek inside. He felt inexplicably drawn to the shop, whether because of the jacket or for some other reason, he didn’t know, but after fifteen more minutes he slowed his pace and began to jog downtown.

By the time he was back in his own neighborhood his heart rate had decreased significantly, but when he was a block or so away from the shop, it sped up so fast that he could hear it pounding in his ears like a warning bell yelling at him to be cautious. He came to a halt at the next corner and leaned up against the nearest building. Why am I even considering this? I should take it slower, work at a job with women, not men. Although Adam was a very determined man and wanted more than anything to get better as soon as possible, he remembered what had happened when he’d pushed himself too far not that long ago. Don’t want to end up in the emergency room again...or worse.

Although the social awkwardness would be bad enough, his main worry was that if something triggered him, there would be no escape. It’s not like he could just run out of work or keep a stash of ice there, and he’d be mortified if he had a total break down in front of co-workers. This is such a bad idea. What if there’s a customer that looks like one of them? What the hell will I do then? Shaking his head, he decided to make his way home so he could shower and start preparing lunch for when Kris arrived, but he couldn’t resist the desire to take one more look at the jacket. With that settled, Adam felt his body relax and began to walk towards the store.

Really incredible….such fine details. He suddenly had an eerie feeling creep up the back of his spine, a mystical sense that he was looking at his future, like this jacket was a crystal ball foretelling…something. Hands and nose pressed to the window, Adam’s eyes were glued to the magnificent garment and he wasn’t paying any attention to the inside of the store, so when a light knock came on the glass, he gasped in surprise and jumped back. There on the other side of the large window stood the employee that Alisan had been trying to introduce him to last week. The young man was wearing a kind smile. He gestured at the jacket and then mouthed, “you like?”
Adam found himself nodding, still wide-eyed and a bit stunned as he tried to recover his breath. He hadn’t had a chance to get a good look at the man last week, but now that he was face to face with him, it was impossible not to notice his high arching brows, black hair falling at an angle across his elfish face, and slightly upturned nose. Deep brown eyes rimmed with purple eyeliner twinkled with innocent friendliness, but the only thought on Adam’s mind as he glanced briefly at them was Kris and how much he missed him. He began to fidget with his bracelet. I want my angel. Adam moved away from the window, eager to escape the discomfort of being in close proximity with a strange man in an unfamiliar social setting, and ignored the guy when he pointed to the ‘Help Wanted’ sign.

An hour later Adam was freshly showered and in the kitchen in his new apartment preparing ingredients for homemade pizza. His still damp hair was dripping a bit, making his white t-shirt see-through in some places where the water had soaked it, and he was only wearing black briefs other than that because he was too warm for anything else. As he sliced mushrooms on his favorite wooden cutting board, Adam hummed to himself happily, thinking about the way he’d talked Kris to sleep last night and how it had made him feel masculine, like a provider almost. So does cooking. He thought it was kind of ironic that he’d spent so much time in the past ten years trying to appear strong and confident through domination when what really seemed to give him that feeling was the sense of security in his relationship with Kris, which allowed his inherently nurturing qualities to shine through. Who knew?

Adam scraped the mushrooms into a bowl and went to work on grating mozzarella cheese. The first boxes he’d unpacked the day after moving in were almost all labeled ‘kitchen,’ because there was just no way he could go without coffee, for one thing, and he tried to avoid eating out frequently because of the cost and the social skills it required to do so when he was alone.

The three main reasons that he had chosen this place was for the extra room he planned to turn into a recording studio, the small fenced-in area out back for Fifi, and for its well appointed kitchen, all of which were rare for West Hollywood apartments unless you wanted to pay and arm and a leg for them. Plus the kitchen had beautiful granite counters and better lighting than when he’d viewed it the first time. Mrs. Stebbins has her priorities straight. Adam especially enjoyed the open layout with no wall separating the living room from the kitchen, and he’d insisted on a place that had washer/dryer hookups, again because it helped him avoid awkward interactions in public.

The entrance door opened into the living room with a closet, utility room, washer/dryer nook and bathroom on the left side. The bathroom was done in all white and had alternating light and dark brown floor tiles that gave the appearance of wood; it was one of the renovations along with the kitchen and new carpeting that had caused him to have to delay his move in date. He was a little disappointed about having beige carpet instead of hardwood, but he supposed it would make it easier for Fifi to run around without slipping all the time. Although the furniture was put in place and the kitchen was mostly set up, there were still many boxes to unpack and Adam hadn’t decorated the off white walls at all because he wanted to do that with Kris. It'll be his home, too...our home. He sighed longingly and prayed to the universe that Matt would find a roommate quickly.

When he was finished preparing the pizza, he set it aside and turned the oven on to preheat. After washing his hands, Adam checked the time and saw to his delight that Kris was due any minute. I guess I should put some pants on...don’t want to expose myself to the world when I open the door. He selected a pair of ass-hugging black jeans and kept on the t-shirt he was wearing. Make-up? Hmmm...maybe some eyeliner and light shadow...and lip gloss of course. And I think I’ll wear those guages Ali gave me for my birthday. Just as he had finished shining up his freckled lips, Adam heard the doorbell. He’s here! It was truly amazing to him that after this many months, he still got excited like this about seeing his boyfriend.
He padded out to the living room, unlocked the door and pulled it open with every intention of pulling his boyfriend inside and kissing the breath right out of him, but Kris wasn’t there. No, instead it was Fifi sitting there apparently all by herself, chowing down on a big pile of doggie treats right on his doorstep. When she saw Adam, however, she started barking happily and jumping into the air. “Fifi? What on earth? How did you get here girl?” He knelt down and picked her up as he looked around outside, but no one else was there. Fifi licked his ear, making him giggle and suddenly he noticed a tiny piece of paper folded up and stuck underneath her collar. “Hmm, this is starting feel like maybe a naughty rabbit is playing tricks on me…what do you think, girl?”

Adam worked the paper out and unfolded it. ‘I’ve come home. I love you.’ “Wha--” He stood there blinking like a stupefied owl, staring at the paper and then at Fifi, not daring to believe what he hoped this meant. He heard a noise and looked up. There was his angel walking up the short path, lugging a huge suitcase and wearing his half of ‘the tie’ that was somehow fastened to the front of his green t-shirt.

“Honey, I’m home,” said Kris with the biggest, most beautiful smile that Adam had ever laid eyes on.

Adam was experiencing something akin to the shock one would feel if they’d just been informed that they won the lottery, only this was much, much better in his opinion. “H-home? You mean--”

“Yes, baby, home,” said Kris when he reached the door. “I’m moving in…right now, if that’s okay with you. All my stuff is in a truck in your parking lot outside.”

“But…but…” A tear gathered in the corner of his eye and trickled slowly down his cheek, a massive bundle of emotions contained in one tiny drop that escaped the stunned and speechless man who was trying to absorb a dream come true. “Angel…you’re really…” he finally managed to whisper, and when Kris nodded he couldn’t hold back more tears as he set down Fifi and brought his hands to his face, because finally, finally Adam Lambert was no longer living alone. No more isolation, no more loneliness in the dead of night. No more wondering how many books he could read to fill up so much time spent by himself once his voice was raw from singing and he’d called everyone he liked to talk to, which wasn’t very many people.

Kris came inside and set down the suitcase, then gathered Adam up in his arms and kissed the side of his head. “Hope those are happy tears, lover,” he said softly.

“Happy?” Adam looked up from Kris’ shoulder, sniffing, his eyes deep pools of a joy so powerful that it was spilling down his face. “Understatement of the century. I…Fifi…” The little puppy was whining to be picked up by him and he glanced down at her affectionately. “I’m thrilled that you’re here, girl, but you’re going to have to wait for my attention.” He wiped his eyes, turned back to Kris and cupped his face. “I can’t believe this,” he breathed in awe, “you are the most amazing, most incredible…and sneakiest man alive. If I wasn’t so ecstatic I’d kill you for not telling me right away,” he chuckled with a half sob and threw his arms around Kris. “I love you, I love you…you’re here…I love you,” he gushed, feeling giddy and dizzy and blessed as they embraced and Kris returned the words fervently.

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A heavy rain was falling outside, spattering the windows and sliding glass doors of Kris and Adam’s apartment and flooding the little gardens that Mrs. Stebbins had so painstakingly planted around the building. It came down in steady sheets with no wind to speak of like a thick curtain, making everything it surrounded feel hushed and still. All the blinds were closed inside, which only added to the sense that this was a private world, a place of safety and love that had been built by tears of pain and joy.

Next to the neatly packed and labeled boxes in the apartment were a slew of unmarked ones that had been brought in from the pickup truck the day before along with some laundry baskets, a nightstand, several suitcases and all of Fifi’s belongings. They’d spent the afternoon unloading the truck, making out, and playing with Fifi, smiling and giggling until their cheeks were sore from it. Time had flown and before they knew it, they were scarfing down a quick dinner and heading out to the club for Adam’s work.

When they’d returned to their apartment afterward, Adam took Fifi out into the yard briefly and then put her in her doggie bed in the utility room. This had left Adam entirely free to concentrate on seducing his lover with unhurried tenderness. The rain started out slowly at first, just a few sprinkles invisible in the dark as the couple had kissed and made love among white sheets and Kris’ striped comforter. It was just beginning to drizzle when they fell asleep in each other’s arms.

The sounds of the downpour this morning reached Adam’s ears only minutes before his alarm clock was due to go off. He’d set it so that he could get up and make them breakfast. Mmmm…warm angel in my bed. He opened his eyes to soft brown hair filling his vision. He lives here now, with me…with me. Adam still couldn’t believe that this was really happening, and his eyes were just a little glassy as he lay there spooning his partner and trying not to cry with happiness. Instead he focused on Kris’ peaceful breathing, the way that he always tucked his left arm under the pillow when they slept this way, and how sweet he looked with his hair sticking up everywhere. That spot on the back of his neck is just begging for attention though. Adam pushed his nose against it, snuffling and nibbling until Kris began to giggle sleepily. So cute. He smiled and tightened his arms around Kris’ chest. “Morning, angel,” he said softly and began to roll away so he could reach the nightstand.

“Noooo,” mumbled Kris in protest, “where goin’?”

“Just turning off the alarm before it starts buzzing,” he replied. He pressed the off button and snuggled back up to his lover. “Did you sleep well?” he asked as he combed his fingers through Kris’ hair.

“Mmm,” he answered with a yawn. “Timeisit?”

“It’s nine o’clock.”

Kris wiggled back into Adam’s body some more and muttered, “s’early.”

He’s probably wiped out after doing all that packing and moving. “Well Fifi’s class isn’t until two so we have plenty of time to relax this morning. You want to go back to sleep?”

“Oh uh…wanna kiss.”

“Oh yeah? I think I can take care of that.” Adam scooted away just enough to help Kris onto his other side so that they were face to face. “Hey there,” he murmured, gazing lovingly into his
boyfriend’s sleep filled eyes. The corners of Kris’ mouth turned up and then he pursed his lips, which Adam thought was silly and adorable and just about perfect.

Adam got up a short time later after Kris had fallen back to sleep. He used the bathroom, threw on some sleep pants and went to the utility room to let Fifi out. She’d clearly been up for a while, and since she was still young, she could not be expected to make it more than a few hours without having an accident, even though Adam had gotten up once in the middle of the night to take her out in the rain. He wrinkled his nose at the spot of wetness on the puppy pad in the corner of the little room, but he was learning not to really mind cleaning up. *She’s so worth it.* His heart felt lighter whenever she was around, and before Kris moved in, Adam had spent a lot of time at his parents’ house with her. Somewhere in the back of his mind, he realized that having something small to nurture was good practice for the future, but he tried not to think about that too much. He didn’t want to get ahead of himself and sometimes he couldn’t silence the voice that said Kris wouldn’t want to be with him long enough to consider raising a child.

Adam was trying to follow a puppy house training method he’d learned about online that would keep the backyard cleaner and would teach her to ring a bell when she needed to go out. He went into the kitchen, got a treat for her and picked up the bouncy, energy filled pup.

“Morning, girl! Oooh, you want this treat? Then you have to go potty in the right place, okay?” he said as she tried to get at the biscuit. After grabbing an umbrella and slipping on the grubby shoes he’d used last night, he rang the little ‘poochie bell’ hanging next to the sliding doors in the living room, said “go potty?” and carried her outside to the circle of rocks he’d made yesterday. Every time she left it, he picked her up and put her back in until finally she did her business in the right place. “Fifi! What a good girl you are! Yes you are, yes you are the smartest, most beautiful dog in the world!” he cooed at her, petting her as she gobbled up the treat. She barked happily a few times and Adam took her back inside to the utility room to dry her off.

After putting her water down, feeding her and changing the puppy pad, Adam washed his hands thoroughly and got to work on breakfast. *Something special…it’s our first morning living together. Hmmm. If only I’d known…I would’ve had this all planned out. Sneaky rabbit! I do love his surprises though.* He finally decided on French toast because he’d picked up some blueberries from the farmer’s market on Thursday that would make a perfect topping.

Kris came ambling in, sniffing with his nose up in the air just as Adam was dipping the last piece of bread into the batter. “Something smells yummy!” He walked up to Adam and hugged him from behind. “You spoil me, you know that?”

“Youp. And I’m gonna keep right on doing it, angel,” he replied with a big grin, sighing inwardly at the feel of Kris’ warm body pressed against his skin.

Squeak! Squeak! Squeak! Kris looked down and saw that Fifi had dropped her rubber ducky at his feet. He chuckled, gave Adam a swift peck on the cheek and went to play with her until breakfast was ready. Adam monitored the French toast on the electric griddle he’d set up on the counter and watched them play, smiling and feeling downright domestic. Whispers of his twenty-year-old self taunted him briefly at how unmanly he’d become, but he told them to shut up.

“Do you know how you got your name, girl?” said Kris, laying on his back and holding Fifi up in the air. “Your daddies were drunk and silly,” he giggled as he shook her a little.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” snorted Adam in amusement, “she ate not too long ago and probably needs to go.”
At those words Kris yelped and jumped up from the floor to take her out.

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“Mmmm…you know we should probably…nmph…get out of the shower at some point,” said Kris as his mouth was being devoured by a tall, blue-eyed man with suds sliding down his naked back.

“No reason to hurry,” Adam murmured, bending his knees a little so he could lick at the beads of water on Kris’ neck, “we have plenty of time…just relax and let me…” he said and began to slither down Kris’ body, biting and sucking on wet skin as he went.

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When they were done ‘showering,’ they went back the to bedroom to dress. “I guess Fifi is still napping,” chuckled Kris as he pulled out clothes from his suitcase. He stopped with a pair of jeans in his hand and looked at Adam thoughtfully.

“What is it?”

“Umm, well, where should I put my clothes and…everything?”

Adam smiled at him. “In the closet, silly.” Strange though. Although he’d said the words casually enough, the thought of having Kris’ clothes and stuff mixed in with his was a little weird. Not bad, just…different. What’s more, he’d always had things arranged exactly as he wanted them and while he wasn’t neurotic about cleanliness, he knew that he paid much more attention to it than Kris did. That’s going to be interesting. In his eagerness to have his angel move in, Adam hadn’t really considered these kinds of things until now. “We’ve got time, how about we unpack a little?” he suggested.

“Sounds like a plan.”

After dragging in some boxes and suitcases they set to work filling up the dresser and closet. They had to be careful because Fifi woke up from her nap and seemed to be made of springs as she jumped up into the air and raced around the apartment. When they were finished, they stepped back to examine the final result. Because Kris had significantly fewer clothes than Adam, they’d managed to fit everything in.

“So,” Kris began as they stood in the walk-in closet looking at the small Kris section and larger Adam section, “what do you think?”

Adam didn’t want to sound upset, because he really wasn’t. It just felt odd. “Wow, it’s kind of…I mean…”

Kris squeezed his arm and looked at him with understanding in his eyes. “It’s okay, I know how it feels. I remember the first time I was living with a boyfriend and it takes a little getting used to.”

Adam nodded, grateful for Kris’ patience and kissed him on the lips. “Thank you, really.” He is too good to me. It seemed that he was going to have to do battle with the prattling, inaccurate voices
today, because he had to shoo another one away that was mocking him, insisting that Kris was too
good for him and would eventually leave. He pulled his boyfriend closer, hugging him tightly until
Kris drew back and looked up at him.

“Yeah, I just…” Adam shook his head and tried to think of the right words. “You’re happy about
this, right, about moving in with me?”

Of course I am!” said Kris emphatically. “You should’ve seen me when Matt said he found a
roommate. I was worse than Fifi when she’s all hyped up. What’s this all about? Why are you
worried about that all of a sudden?”

It’d been a solid month since Adam had successfully beat back his fear of being abandoned to a
tolerable level. Sighing heavily, he rested his forehead on his lover’s shoulder and mumbled, “guess
I’m feeling a little insecure, I mean more than usual. I don’t know why though.”

Kris lifted Adam’s chin and kissed him gently. “I never want to be with anyone but you, never,” he
said as they locked eyes, and Adam could feel the love and reassurance pass into his heart which
then pumped it throughout the rest of his body.

“Never,” he repeated, because he needed to.

“Come on, we should have done this first thing,” said Kris without explaining himself. He took
Adam by the hand and walked out of the closet, then reached into a pocket in his suitcase on the bed
and pulled out his half of the tie.

Oh wow. Adam was pretty sure he knew what Kris was about to say, and the implications of it felt
enormous, powerful and beautiful all at the same time. “W-where should we put them?” he asked
with a slight tremor in his voice.

“Well, I was thinking that it would be kind of cool to have them framed together. What do you think
of that?”

Adam’s face suddenly burst into a beaming smile. “I love that idea!” he squealed and threw his arms
around Kris. “You’re a genius! I wish we had time to do that before Fifi’s class, but…I think I know
what we can do for now.”

Three minutes later the couple was sitting at the edge of the bed and staring at the wall, which was
adorned with the two halves of the tie, side by side a few feet above the bed. This seemingly simple
gesture somehow made Adam feel like his feet were planted firmly on a path that led to his future
with Kris. He turned his head and grinned widely, eyes sparkling with the same joy he’d felt
yesterday when Kris made his surprise announcement.

Kris’ expression was the mirror image of Adam’s, and before long the two of them were cuddled up
on the bed just reveling in the moment, glancing up once in a while at the tie and giggling.

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“Are ya ready girl? Are ya?” Adam said as he slapped his thighs and shook his head playfully at Fifi,
who was leaping and yipping while Kris was trying to fasten her leash to her collar. She was all
decked out in her navy blue sweater and seemed to sense that something exciting was about to
happen.

“Adam,” Kris complained, “stop getting her all riled up, I can’t get this thing on!”

“Sorry,” he laughed, “here, let me help.”

When they were all ready, Adam put Fifi in her traveling crate and loaded her up in the back seat of
the car. The rain had finally stopped. Adam took a few deep breaths in an attempt to settle his
jangling nerves, inhaling the dewy smell in the air and trying to exhale his apprehension. People,
maybe men, and who knows how many? Just going to have to focus on Fifi and Kris. “Okay…I’m
okay,” he assured Kris, and himself. “Let’s go.”

Kris had been elated to find out that he had his very own parking spot, which was currently occupied
by Jason’s pickup. Adam’s car was parked right next it, but he asked Kris to drive because he was
still feeling a little shaky. Gonna be fine…fine….it’s a dog class, for crying out loud. Nothing is
going to happen that I can’t handle.

During the drive to Fifi’s class, Kris’ phone rang. “It’s Matt,” he said after taking a quick peek at it.
He pressed the answer button and put it on speaker so he could keep both hands on the wheel.
“What’s up? Everything going okay with the new roommate?”

“Yes,” Matt replied, “he wanted me to tell you thanks for leaving your desk behind because he
doesn’t have one, but he found something in one of the drawers that you missed.”

“Really? What is it?”

“Umm, let’s see, what did Tommy call it…oh yeah, a capo.”

Kris chuckled and threw a quick grin at Adam. “Your new roommate knows what a capo is? He
must play the guitar.”

“He does, and the bass, too. He’s a pretty cool guy. You guys should come over and meet him
sometime. I think Adam would really like him.”

More new people? Don’t know about that. He was still trying to adjust to being around Matt and
wasn’t sure he was ready to take on another challenge just yet.

Kris seemed to note Adam’s frown and continued his conversation. “We’ll see. Anyway, tell him I’ll
pick it up when I come for the piano tomorrow.”

“Will do. Alright, I’ll see you then and tell Adam I said hi and that we should all hang out again
soon.”

Adam smiled at that. “Right here, Matt, you’re on speaker, and I agree. Just give us some time to
settle in.”

“Hey man! Sounds great, give me a call when you’re up for it.”

They all said goodbye and Kris hung up just as they were reaching their destination.
When they arrived at the pet store, Adam let Fifi out of her crate and took her by the leash onto the sidewalk. The first thing she did, of course, was to run to the nearest vertical object and pee on it. She then took to sniffing everything she could get her little nose on, pulling the leash and almost choking herself until Adam finally picked her up in exasperation and brought her inside. I hope they teach us how to fix that...and how to get her to stop chewing on my shoes! He’d had to put every single pair in the bedroom closet to keep her from gnawing on them.

They saw Jen and she pointed them to the back of the store. There was a circle of about ten chairs surrounding a pen where several puppies were already playing. Adam unfastened Fifi’s leash and set her down in the pen, feeling a little like he was sending a child off to school for the first time. Ridiculous. The couple sat in a pair of chairs, both of them nodding to the four other owners who were all women. Please let us be the only guys. The ladies smiled at them and everyone sat back, watching their puppies romp about while waiting for the class to start.

“Look at her, she’s so feisty!” said Kris, giggling at how little Fifi wasn’t letting herself be pushed around by a big Labrador pup twice her size. She was very quick on her feet and simply ran around the other puppy and nipped its tail.

You go Fifi! Such a brave girl! Gradually more owners arrived with their dogs and three men joined just before two o’clock to complete the circle. Two of them were quite a bit older than Adam, but one looked to be about his age and had a beautiful Cocker Spaniel puppy. The guy was very sociable and walked around and shook everyone’s hand. “Charlie’s the name, and this here is Jezzabelle,” he said cheerfully.

It’s a hand shake, just like the one you gave a fan at the club that night. Heart thumping as if he were about to skydive out of a plane, Adam accepted the guy’s hand and grasped it tightly as they shook.

“That’s a firm grip!” chuckled Charlie, massaging his fingers afterward.

Adam hadn’t meant to hurt him; he’d just overcompensated because of his nerves, plus there was a part of him that wanted to establish that he wasn’t someone to mess with. “Um, sorry about that,” he muttered.

Kris reached over and squeezed his thigh, smiling in a reassuring way and Adam felt his jitters recede a little and his pulse slow down. Just then, the class leader arrived and introduced herself as Annie. A tall, thin woman who looked to be in her late twenties, Annie was extremely upbeat, almost nauseatingly so. She spoke with a high-pitched, bubbly voice that made Adam cringe on the inside.

“Welcome everyone, to our basic puppy education class! I’m so glad you’re all here today and, my my, what lovely puppies you all have!”

Oh my god, I am so going to have a headache by the end of this! He looked around at the others and saw that they too were gritting their teeth, even Charlie, and for some reason that made Adam feel even more at ease, like they were all bonded in mutual annoyance at having their eardrums ruptured.

Annie started off by running through what they’d be learning over the next eight weeks and then asked them to go around and introduce themselves and their dogs. Adam nudged Kris in the ribs and whispered, “You go for us,” and was relieved when he agreed. After Kris gave their names, a collective “awwww” sounded when he picked up Fifi and made her little paw wave at everyone because she was so gosh darn adorable.
“Don’t you all be fooled,” said the Labrador’s owner, “that little one nearly beat up my Tucker!” A chorus of chuckles broke out and Kris put Fifi back in the pen.

What Annie lacked in a voice fit for human ears, she made up for with her abundance of knowledge about dogs. She began talking about the importance of puppy socialization and then suggested that they play an obedience game to break the ice. They all leashed their puppies and she took down the pen. “Okay! So what I’m going to do is take these yummy doggie treats and hide them around a small area of the store! I want you all to walk your dogs for ten minutes and we’ll see whose puppy gets the most! Now, when you walk them, you should be the leader.” She went on to instruct them on the essentials of being what she called a “pack leader” and how to properly walk their puppies. “I’m going to monitor everyone to give corrections and tips and I’ll blow the whistle when it’s time to come back!”

Annie left for a few minutes to hide the treats, and Adam took the opportunity to lean over and whisper into Kris’ ear. “This isn’t so bad,” he said, feeling proud of himself and relaxed enough to bite his boyfriend’s earlobe.

Kris yelped in surprise and then flushed when everyone’s heads turned toward them. “Dork,” he snickered, punching Adam lightly on the shoulder.

The game was pretty fun, but Kris and Adam were more interested in learning how to walk Fifi so that she didn’t pull quite so much. By the time it was over, Fifi had found five treats, coming in second place to Jezzabelle. Adam slid his hand into Kris’ and swung it a little as they returned to the circle, smiling at their puppy who seemed to know that she’d done well.

Just then Charlie came walking by with his Cocker Spaniel. “Nice job, man!” he said jovially and slapped Adam hard on the back.

Adam gave a huge start and would have punched the guy out on reflex if Kris hadn’t quickly pulled him away. “Fuck…goddammit!” he snarled when they got to an empty aisle at the far side of the store. *Why the fuck did he do that?* His entire body was trembling with emotion like some kind of tree that had been torn from the ground, slammed back down and told to deal with it. “Shit!” *I knew something like this would happen! Why did I even come here…fuck!* Fifi whined and sat down on her haunches looking confused. Over and over Adam ran his hands through his hair until Kris grasped them while still holding onto the puppy’s leash.

“Adam, look at me,” he said calmly. He let go of Adam’s hands and cupped his face. “Breathe…that’s it…slowly now…in…out…look at my eyes…”

Adam did. He stared at them steadily until he found himself drowning pools of smooth chocolate that took him in and coated his frazzled mind with sweet calm. *It’s okay…I’m okay…but damn, how the fuck am I going to go back out there? I hate this.* “Angel.” He reached out and Kris caught him in a tight hug and rubbed his back soothingly. “I can’t do this…I can’t…” *A failure, that’s what you are, Lambert. You can’t even get through a simple dog class.* Adam blinked back tears as his old self began to torment him. *What made you think you could do this? Think you’re all better now? Still just a damaged freak.*

“You want to go home?” asked Kris.

“I…I don’t know,” he sniffed, trying desperately not to listen to the awful words in his head. Sometimes it was very difficult to make decisions at a time like this, especially when he had to do battle with himself. *Want to be normal. You’re not normal, Lambert. Just go home and take the easy
way out like you always do. No! Shut the fuck up! I have to learn how to work through this shit! He wiped his eyes and pulled away from his security blanket. “No, I want to finish the class.” I can do this.

Kris peered at him intently for a moment and must have seen the determination trying to muscle its way through the chaos to shine in Adam’s eyes, because he smiled and said, “so brave.” They kissed briefly and then returned to the class hand in hand with Fifi trotting beside them.

“Sorry about that,” said Kris after they sat down amidst curious stares from the group. “Just needed to take a quick break.”

Adam noticed that Charlie was looking a little intimidated. *What the hell am I supposed to do about that? Normal people apologize for scaring the shit out of someone, Lambert. Think you can do that?* But he ignored Charlie for the time being and tried to focus on what Annie was saying about basic commands. Ten minutes later everyone got up and started working with their puppies on “sit.” “Kris, I’ll be right back,” Adam said quietly and then made his way over to Charlie, who backed away a little at his approach. *Just say you’re sorry…open your mouth and speak.* Adam began to rub the little angel on his bracelet with his thumb and tried to make eye contact. “Listen, I’m really sorry about back there…I… What? What do I say now? “Umm, I just don’t like people touching me, erm, I mean people I don’t know.” Oh my god, I sound like a fucking idiot.

Charlie smiled, however, and appeared to relax. “That’s all right, sorry for startling you. Won’t happen again.” He stuck out his hand, but then chuckled and lowered it immediately.

“Thanks…umm, nice dog.” he said, feeling completely lame, and hurried back to Kris and Fifi. *Real smooth, Lambert. SHUT. THE. FUCK. UP!* And it did shut up this time. “Well that seemed to work,” he mumbled to himself.

“You’re amazing,” Kris whispered to him and pecked him right on the mouth in front of everyone. Adam couldn’t help the grin that slowly spread across his face. *I did it.* He knew that the cruel voice was still there, hiding and waiting for him to be vulnerable again so it could strike, but all he could do was to take things one step at a time. *Focus on Fifi.*

Fifi, being a Xolo and therefore extremely intelligent, was the first to master the command. She looked almost bored as she accepted one piece of biscuit after another upon completing the task several times with both Kris and Adam taking turns.

“Wonderful!” trilled Annie. “Look everyone…you see how he did that? Would you mind showing everyone, Adam?”

Although used to having many eyes on him while performing, he’d always relied on being above and separated from his audience to help him feel comfortable and this was the exact opposite of that. He furrowed his brows and gathered his courage. “Sure.” Looking straight down into Fifi’s eyes, he held out his hand palm down and then dropped it quickly. “Sit.” She immediately sat and gazed up at him like she was hoping for something a little more challenging. “Good girl, Fifi!” said Adam brightly as he pet her and fed her a treat.

“Excellent! They key is confidence. See how he looked at her seriously without breaking eye contact? He was certain that she would listen and she did. Now Adam, try it two more times only don’t give her any more treats. The reward of your affection should be enough.”

The class was over at 3:30 and many of the owners hung around to chat or shop, but Adam was
exhausted and wanted to leave right away. The emotional energy required to get through the class had sapped him completely and he couldn’t wait to get home and rest for a little while. Plus he had a headache. *Ugh. Can I just not go to work tonight?*

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“Ohhhhh yeah…right there…god that feels so good.”

“You’re so tense,” said Kris from his position astride Adam’s naked body. He poured a bit more of the coconut flavored massage oil into his hands and began to dig into the freckled back once more.

“Oh, oh jesus that’s a big one,” Adam said, wincing as Kris kneaded a particularly large knot just below his right shoulder blade. He sucked air in through his teeth and toughed it out until it started to feel better. “Mmmm…you’re amazing at this. Thank you so much.”

“Any time, baby,” Kris replied with a kiss to Adam’s spine. He was clad in a pair of briefs because they’d decided that if Kris were naked, too, then the massage would never happen.

*It’s still hot though.* He could feel his boyfriend’s swelling bulge brush the skin on his ass every time Kris leaned forward. It made him think about one of the dreams he’d had where Kris had entered him from behind, just like this. A little shiver tiptoed up his spine just imagining it. *This is heaven.* With his arms and legs splayed out on the bed and Kris’ skilled hands working their magic, Adam began to feel very, very relaxed. Those calloused fingers were drawing all of the stress and mental exhaustion right out of his being and he felt like he was sinking into the mattress.

Kris wiggled down onto Adam’s thighs and began to work on his lower back. “So nice…sooooo nice…I could seriously lie here forever.” He heard a chuckle and then felt that gorgeous body slide down a little more. “Mmm, don’t think I’ve ever had my ass massaged. I like.” Oh yes, he definitely liked. With strong hands Kris worked the toned flesh, spreading Adam’s cheeks with every dig and circle, wider and wider each time. A tiny moan of pleasure escaped Adam’s lips at the multitude of sensations…Kris’ groin hot and pressing, air tickling his warm opening when it was exposed, his muscles relaxing, and just the utter sexiness of it all. He moaned again, louder this time and felt a burning desire for his lover’s tongue. “Lick me, angel.”

“Thought you’d never ask,” Kris returned playfully as he pushed Adam’s legs apart and lay down in between them. “Coconut ass…yumm,” he giggled, trickling a little oil from the bottle right onto Adam’s hole.

“Sounds like a new delicacy,” he joked with a shiver. “Woo! Cold!”

“Mmm, not for long, baby,” Kris purred low in his throat.

*Sexy.*

After about two minutes of Kris’ hot tongue teasing his entrance with long, slow, drawn out licks, Adam looked like a glistening star that was about to explode. Body trembling with fingers and toes dug into the mattress, he groaned and panted and bit at the sheets until he couldn’t take it anymore. “Kris,” he whimpered.

“Mmm?”
A soft smack sounded as their lips separated for the fifth time that morning. “Mmm…do you really have to go to work?” asked Adam with a hint of a pout as he gazed down at Kris.

“God I wish I didn’t, believe me,” said Kris, looking up into his lover’s gorgeous face, make up free…just pure, simple beauty. He’d deliberately set the alarm an hour early just so he could bask in the bliss of waking up and snuggling with his lover on a weekday. They’d both rolled out of bed to pee and take care of Fifi before stripping off hastily thrown on shorts and diving back under the blankets. The little pup was currently curled up in ball in the corner of their room, dozing on the carpet amidst dappled rays that were glimmering through the oak tree outside. *It’s our room now… ours.*

“Oh I believe you,” Adam whispered and leaned down to connect their mouths again.

Kris hummed a little when long fingers began to sweep lightly up and down his body from collarbone to where Adam’s leg was draped over his hips. He could feel nine inches of heat pressing against his left side, and no doubt Adam was acutely aware of Kris’ arousal underneath that beautiful, pale thigh, but it seemed that they were both content to just smooch and caress for a little while. *We have all the time in the world now.* He grinned against Adam’s lips and wrote an invisible phrase on his freckled back.

Adam chuckled quietly and lifted his head. “I love you, too, angel.”

Kris was suddenly reminded of the first time that Adam called him ‘angel.’ *Halloween night at that club.* It was a bitter sweet memory because Adam had been drunk and confused, but up until then…*so much fun…so sexy.*

His eyes must have seemed far away because he felt lips on the corner of his mouth that he hadn’t seen coming. “Penny for your thoughts?”

He smiled and brushed the hair away from Adam’s face. “I was just remembering the Halloween party at your parents’ house,” he replied, not wanting to remind him of anything painful.

“Mmm…you looked so incredible in those red wings, and the leather pants…hot,” Adam breathed as he started to nuzzle Kris’ neck.

The mention of leather brought something else to mind, too. *This is as good a time as any.* It still amazed him sometimes that he could just ask for things he wanted. “You know,” Kris began, arching his head back to give Adam better access, “I’ve been thinking a lot about leather pants recently,” he said, shivering a little at the sensation of wet pressure on sensitive spots that only his lover knew. A hot twitch against his side made him grin slyly.

“Have you now?” said Adam in a low voice that was bordering on suggestive as he continued to nibble in all the right places.
“Mhmm.” The sound was more of a moan and Kris brought his hands up to thread them into raven hair.

So slowly that it was almost torturous Adam began to shift and crawl until he was on top of Kris, all the while laying down those tiny licks and bites, which was akin to flipping on every erogenous switch, one by one. “Interesting… got a thing for leather, my naughty little rabbit?”

“Not sure,” he answered, his words coming out breathy because it was hard to talk when his brain was sending him all green lights, “but when you wore that thong one time…and leather pants on the honey night…yeah…that totally did it for me.” He groaned softly as their lengths brushed together and tried to finish his thought before his ability to speak vanished entirely. “The smell, the feel…even the sound of it turned me on.”

“Well then,” said Adam as those freckled lips started to move south, “I think we’ll have a little adventure tonight. But for now…” He reached back for the covers and pulled them up around him while wiggling down Kris’ torso. “…I’m going to make sure you’re nice and relaxed for work.”

There was something oddly hot about getting head without being able to see what was going on down there, and when Adam was completely hidden under the blankets, the only thought in Kris’ mind was…yes please.

It was almost like being blindfolded except he could see the blankets moving when he looked down, white and blue stripes tenting up and then… “Ohhhh…” He envisioned those soft lips as they kissed the tip briefly and slid…inch by inch…over the rim and down…enveloping his shaft in warm, moist heat all the way to the base. A part of a word or maybe just a wispy sound escaped Kris’ lungs as pressure squeezed his cock; he could even feel the ridges on the roof of Adam’s mouth just behind his curled-in lip. “Adam…oh god, baby.” After four languid, exquisite swallows, the lips began to move up and down, slowly at first and then faster as nails dug into Kris’ thighs. His hands were longing for thick black hair, but all they found when he reached down was smooth cotton rising and falling in a steady rhythm.

Without hesitating Kris pushed his hands under the covers because he just had to touch, needed to feel the ebony silk slip through his fingers, needed to pull it ever so gently in time to the bucking of his hips and panting breaths. “Yesss,” he hissed when at last everything was in its rightful place. Tugging. Thrusting. Pricks of delicious pain on his thighs. Hot mouth slippery with spit and precum. Pleasure. It crept lower and deeper, tingling and gathering power with every yank of hair. Faster… faster… and then it happened all at once; a swallow, a thrust, a clawing of nails and his muscles clenched… “Adam!” The name came bursting from his mouth as his dick was milked and he could feel those jaws working by the touch of his pinkies on sweaty temples until the cum was all gone.

But it wasn’t really gone, just held captive momentarily to be shared an instant later, swapped back and forth in a lovers kiss. They both moaned softly, Kris in the afterglow and Adam in need. Kris’ brain started to work again as their tongues danced.

A mysterious scratching sound came from somewhere in the room. “It’s Fifi,” Adam whispered when their mouths were empty. “They call her breed velcro dogs,” he chuckled.

“I can totally believe that,” Kris replied, because the puppy was rarely far from their feet unless she was asleep or in the back yard. She was also as clever as she was small; somehow the tiny thing managed to climb up onto the bed and began to trot over to the couple, her tail wagging a mile a minute. “Umm, I really want to return the favor, baby, but it’s a little weird with her up here,”
giggled Kris.

“It’s fine, angel, I’ll take care of myself while you’re showering. You have to get ready soon anyway, so let’s just cuddle with her,” he said, making a little space between them for Fifi.

Wow, sacrificing a blow job for snuggles. As they cuddled and pet their puppy, Kris thought about how children sometimes crawl into bed with their parents. Don’t get ahead of yourself, now. He would make a great dad, though.

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After he was showered and dressed in khakis and a dark brown polo shirt, Kris made his way to the kitchen for breakfast. Mmm…I smell coffee. Yesterday morning, Monday, Adam had made omelets and Kris found to his delight that he’d be enjoying more than cereal again today. “You know, you really don’t have to do that,” he stated as he wrapped his arms around Adam’s waist, just to make it clear that he wasn’t expecting Adam to cook all the time. He had to admit, however, that it was nice to have a balance of give and take in a relationship rather than giving until he had nothing left for himself. It’s about time.

“I know, but I like to. Plus, now that we’re sharing more breakfasts together, there’s no way that I’m eating Fruit Loops,” Adam smirked and yelped when Kris pinched him on the ass. “Hey now, be nice or I won’t share my famous scrambled eggs,” he teased while scooping the eggs onto two plates. In doing so, he accidentally knocked an unused half of a tomato onto the floor and before he could pick it up, Fifi snatched it and tried to eat it. Fortunately the tomato half was too big for her mouth and she only managed to get in a few bites. “Silly dog,” Adam said affectionately as he took it from her and tossed it in the sink. “Well I guess it can’t hurt since Xolos are naturally vegetarians, in fact I could probably make her food myself.”

Kris chuckled at that, thinking of Adam the dog chef preparing gourmet meals for Fifi. He was just about to make a joke when the little puppy froze in place. “What’s the matter, girl?” They both looked at her with concern on their faces.

“Maybe she senses something,” said Adam, leaning down to get a closer look at her. Fifi gazed up at him with those large brown eyes, shuddered once, and then vomited on Adam’s bare foot. “Ugh! Fifi! Oh my god that’s so gross!” he yelled in disgust at the regurgitated red blob on his toes. Adam looked at Fifi sternly, but when he saw her head and tail droop in rejection, it was obvious that he couldn’t stay mad at her. “Aww, I’m sorry, girl, it was my fault for dropping that.”

Kris, meanwhile, was laughing so hard that he was holding his side. “Your face!” he guffawed, “that was so priceless!” Adam thwacked him on the butt and told him to shut up and get him a paper towel.

When Adam’s foot was back to its pre-vomit state, the couple sat down together for breakfast. “I don’t have school tonight,” said Kris, “so I’ll be home at about five-thirty.” I’ll be home…yeah. His stomach did a little somersault of happiness as he looked across the table at his boyfriend, who was also smiling, and he repeated the phrase again.

“I love hearing you say that,” Adam said with a little sigh and continued to butter his toast.

Kris made a kissy face at him and glanced around at his new home before going back to breakfast.
Things were starting to come together in the apartment. The two of them had spent most of Sunday and part of Monday night unpacking their boxes and arranging things. Some items went right into the living room closet for the time being since they didn’t need five laundry baskets, two extra lamps, etc. The fact that they were setting up house together made Kris feel like they had both moved into the apartment at the same time and that he wasn’t just visiting Adam.

One challenge they’d come across was finding room for their combined CDs and DVDs, because Adam’s entertainment center could only hold so much. In the end it was decided that they would need to buy a self-standing rack to accommodate everything. Kris thought that the way Adam organized his music and movies was rather endearing, but it also served to highlight how different they were from each other. Although that wasn’t necessarily bad, it did mean that they would have to compromise at times, and Kris hoped that he wouldn’t slip back into his old patterns of automatically agreeing with everything just to keep the peace.

He took a few bites of the ‘famous scrambled eggs,’ which certainly deserved the title, and washed them down with some orange juice. *Yuck. Toothpaste and orange juice don’t go together. Why do I always forget that?* “So what are your plans today?” he asked Adam.

“After the gym I think I’ll take Fifi for a long walk, maybe go to the park, and then I’ll work on setting up the studio because I really need to finish my demo.” Adam took a sip of his black coffee, frowning slightly when he put the mug down. “And…well I guess I can’t put off calling Brian anymore, so…” He ran a finger around the lip of the mug and peered at Kris. “You do think it’s a good idea, right, I mean for me to mentor him?”

Kris nodded. “Brian got in trouble at school and I think he’s headed down the wrong path. I kind of got the feeling that he doesn’t have a therapist so if nothing else, maybe you could convince him to see one.”

“Hmm. I’ll call him today then,” he said with hesitation in his voice as if he still wasn’t sure he was doing the right thing, but then his demeanor changed completely and he threw a devious smile at Kris. “Oh, and of course, I’ll be preparing for our adventure tonight.”

Kris felt a bare foot creeping up his pant leg and shivered. *Please let this day go by fast.*

Just before he left for work, Kris found Adam back in the bedroom with Fifi, listening to the sounds of the ocean with a peaceful expression on his face as he pet the puppy.

***

All throughout the first half of the day, Kris couldn’t stop wondering what Adam had in store for him that night. *Of course it’s going to be hot….leather…mmm.* This kind of sexual freedom and exploration still felt rather new to him after so many years of going along with whatever someone else wanted, and he was damn excited to play with kinks, to make his fantasies come to life, to discover his limits…*to have control over my own body.* True, he’d never suffered trauma like Adam had, but he’d certainly done things he didn’t want to just to make his boyfriends happy. Dildos, for example, were not on Kris’ fun list. He didn’t like the feel of something artificial in his body, but he’d willingly accepted them countless times because he didn’t know how to say no back then.
Just as he was getting lost in a daydream about his sexy lover all leathered out, someone knocked loudly on his counter. “Wha?” He snapped his eyes into focus, saw Matt grinning like an idiot and surreptitiously gave him the finger.

“Same to you, man. So, you wanna have lunch with me and Tommy today?” he asked as he chewed on a hangnail.

“Nah, I wouldn’t want to be the third wheel on your hot man date,” teased Kris, casting a quick look around to make sure there weren’t any customers needing help.

“Ha!” snorted Matt, “very funny, and he’s straight, by the way.”

“No way,” Kris laughed, “I don’t believe that for one second.” He’d gone over on Sunday to get his piano and had already met Matt’s new roommate. “He’s definitely gay.”

“Nope! Told me himself, the boy is straight as an arrow.”

Kris shook his head dubiously because he knew his gaydar couldn’t be that out of wack. “You misheard him or something.”

Matt rolled his eyes in exasperation and poked his index finger at Kris’ chest. “Fine, come to lunch and ask him yourself then.”

“Fine, I will,” stated Kris with complete confidence that Matt would soon be eating his words.

When lunchtime finally rolled around, the two friends left for the food court, chatting about getting together this weekend with Adam and Alisan and what they should do. Tommy was already at a table chowing down on Taco Bell when they arrived. “Good to see you,” said Kris, “we’ll be right back.”

“No problem,” said Tommy around a mouth full of burrito. He was wearing what Kris recognized as the same black and white striped hoodie he’d seen on Sunday, but after another glance he saw that it was actually a sweater with the same type of stripes. As he walked away to get some food, Kris considered that maybe Tommy was trying to match his clothes to his black and blonde hair. *Anyway, he’s definitely gay. Adam would love that lilac eye shadow he’s got on.*

After the three men were all settled with their lunch, Tommy struck up a conversation with Kris about music, which led into sharing stories about when they’d started playing the guitar, how they’d learned to play, and what they hoped to do in the future.

“Hmm,” Tommy began after unwrapping his second burrito, “well right now I’ve got a gig with a local band, but I’m hoping for something more down the road, a bigger show, you know? I work downtown too, though. Gotta pay the bills somehow.” He grinned and started eating again, sucking at a bit of red sauce that had dripped in between his thumb and forefinger.

Matt and Kris nodded in unison because they both knew what that was like. “At least you’re doing something you like,” said Matt. “I, for one, am getting tired of smelly feet.” He went on to talk about his aspirations to become an actor after he graduated this year.

“Let me guess, you want to be a comedic actor, right?” said Tommy amidst chuckles from the others.

Kris found Tommy to be very laid back, friendly and easy to talk to. *Cool guy. Adam would really*
“So, how about hanging out with us this weekend?” suggested Matt to his roommate, completely missing the pointed stare Kris was directing at him since he’d clearly forgotten about Adam’s reticence to meet new people. Thankfully, Tommy already had plans and Kris was spared from a potentially awkward moment.

“Can’t,” he said after wiping his mouth, “I’ve got a hot date.”

Kris smiled smugly at Matt, sure that his friend was about to be proven wrong. “Oh?” he prompted, hoping that Tommy would continue.

“Mhmm, met her last weekend. You should see her tattoos …what?” Brows furrowed, he looked at Kris’ dumbstruck face and cocked his head to the side.

“Uh, nothing…nothing at all,” he said quickly, “erm she sounds really cool.” He felt a kick under the table and groaned inwardly at the flack he knew he’d be getting from Matt.

Tommy smirked and rested his chin in his hand. “You thought I was gay, didn’t you?”

“Uhh…” Rich laughter came from his left and Kris blushed. “Shut up, Matt,” he grumbled.

Tommy was a good sport, though. “It’s fine,” he said with a smile, “people make that mistake all the time.”

***

Adam…leather…Adam…leather. It was like a mantra in Kris’ head as he drove home, already anticipating what was sure to be a memorable night.

Amazed that he remembered where to park with his brain so full of kinky sex, Kris threw the gearshift and practically leapt out of the car. In less than a minute he was at his front door, pulling out keys, fingers fumbling as he tried to work the damn thing into the lock. *Finally!* He pushed the door open and was about to announce his arrival when he saw Adam. Words were trying really hard to crawl out of his mouth, but they were blocked by the repeated swallowing of Kris’ throat. “Huhma,” was the best he could do.

“Welcome home, angel.” Adam was standing at the kitchen counter facing the door, and from what Kris could see he looked completely naked except for a pair of what had to be the sexiest gloves on the planet. *Spikes! Oh my god…I’m doomed!* Leather covered his lover’s arms from elbow to knuckles, and there on the back of those devilish things were several rows of two inch spikes. Blue eyes gleamed at him with wicked intentions, framed by thick lashes, eyeliner and dark grey shadow. *Black lips…oh my fuck!* Kris didn’t need to look down to know that he was already sporting a raging hard on. *Help.* Fifi circled around his feet, trying to get his attention, but all he could see was the vision of sin before him.

“You’re just in time for dinner,” Adam purred, “why don’t you have a seat?”

*Feet, yeah…walking.* Unable to tear his eyes away from the devil, he moved forward in the general
direction of the table, but when he got close enough to the counter to see over it, he came to a halt. Adam wasn’t naked, oh no, he was wearing black leather pants that were so tight they looked like skin. A little whimper fluttered into the air despite Kris’ efforts to be more than a feeble pile of bones.

“Sit,” said the man, pointing to the table.

Kris sat, or least he was pretty sure he did, because he’d bent his knees and didn’t fall on the floor.

Adam sauntered over to him, leaned over and licked the shell of his ear. “You ready to eat?” he whispered. Such a simple, everyday question, but he might as well have been asking Kris if he was ready to be fucked within an inch of his life. The light, distinctive aroma of the black material, the soft creaking sounds it made when Adam moved…the way it was outlining every inch of manliness…Kris’ was on sensory overload already and it was only dinner. Shiny spikes were mere inches from his face and he couldn’t help himself; he licked one, just a short flick of his tongue, but it was enough to make Adam’s breath hitch. Kris’ punishment was a bite to the neck. Oh god…no way am I going to be able to eat.

He watched the perfect, firm, leather clad ass move out of sight into the kitchen and tried to breathe. His dick was aching so badly that he had to palm it, rub, squeeze, anything to take the edge off.

“Hands on the table,” came Adam’s gruff voice.

*He knows me too well.* Suddenly a delicious smell reached Kris’ nose and his stomach rumbled, reminding him that he was hungry because yeah, he’d kind of forgotten about food.

And there he was, carrying a platter of ribs to the table, the gleaming spikes pointing out to the sides. It should have looked funny, but it didn’t. The combination of domestic Adam and sex god Adam was hot as fuck. Two more times he returned to the kitchen until all the food was on the table. Barbequed ribs, two dinner rolls, a bunch of grapes, a carrot, and one Twizzler. *Whoa. Really weird dinner choices.* Adam seemed to have it all planned out, and he put a roll and the grapes on Kris’ plate along with some ribs and took the rest for himself. “Bon appetite,” said Adam as he poured blood red wine in his glass and pale beer in Kris’.

He heard a strange sound and turned his head to see Fifi gnawing on a dog bone as big as she was. *That should keep her busy for a while.*

As soon as they started to eat, Kris understood the mysterious dinner. Each had a rib in hand, but Adam was tearing into his like a starved beast, growling and staring until Kris was sure that he’d come in his pants. He tried to match the ferociousness, but it was impossible because Adam was licking the sauce like blood from his fingers, pink tongue poking out from black stained lips. Next came the sounds and images of an empty bone sliding in and out of that pretty mouth, teasing, taunting. "Adam," he rasped, clenching the sticky rib in his hands until barbeque sauce dribbled down his wrist.

Adam grabbed his arm and with a devious smile, lapped at his skin until it was clean. “Eat,” he said. *Shit.*

It was merciless torture. While Kris did his best to chew the little grapes whose moisture did nothing for his dry mouth, Adam was crunching, sucking and licking his carrot. He ripped into a hard roll while Kris’ teeth sunk into one so soft it was like biting a pillow. Everything was designed to imply that the wolf was eating the rabbit. And it was working. By the time Adam picked up the lone
Twizzler, Kris’ briefs were soaking wet and it was taking every ounce of will not to touch himself.

But the best had been saved for last. Adam stood and walked around the table, pulled Kris’ chair out and straddled his lap. The contact to his rock hard cock made him cry out in pain or pleasure or both and he instinctively started to thrust into Adam.

“Shhh…be still my little rabbit,” Adam whispered. He put the cherry red rope in his mouth and tore off a bite, his head snapping back as the Twizzler broke, shining spikes just missing Kris’ chest by millimeters.

“Please,” Kris begged, letting his forehead fall onto freckled skin.

Whether it was planned this way or Adam had finally decided to have mercy, he began grind into Kris’ dick while continuing to destroy the candy with his teeth.

“Yes, oh god yes…please faster…please!” Kris reached around to cup black cheeks and Adam let him. Suddenly the Twizzler was gone and dark smeared lips came crashing down onto Kris’ as they rocked into each other over and over. One light press of the spikes to his neck and Kris was gone, coming with hard, jerky thrusts, his lips and moans held captive by Adam’s mouth.

“There now,” said the wolf sweetly when Kris finally went still, “feel better?”

Kris made his head move up and down.

“Good. Now it’s time for dessert.”

_He didn’t come._ It was true. He gaped at the bulge as Adam stood and was amazed that leather could stretch that much.

Five minutes later, Kris could safely say that dinner would be nothing compared to dessert. He’d been roughly manhandled to the bedroom and told to strip, lie down and hold onto the bed frame until he was given permission to let go.

“No,” said Adam as he crawled up the bed and hovered over the rabbit, “because you are my angel and my love, you tell me when to stop, got it?”

_Here lies Kristopher Allen, killed by the hottest sex of his short life._ “Yes,” he breathed. Adam smiled genuinely and pressed a soft kiss to his lips before backing off the bed and standing.

Fifi, like the little shadow she was, came racing into the bedroom and pawed at Adam’s legs. “Not now, girl,” he said kindly as he picked her up.

Kris giggled a little at the sight of the two of them, tall tough man with spikes on his hands petting a teeny little pup.

“I heard that,” said Adam. “You stay right there and don’t let go while I put her down for a nap.”

He bit his lip to keep from laughing and nodded. _I love him so freaking much._

When Adam returned he was all business again and Kris felt himself respond to the waves of heat radiating from his lover like a sex aura. This time it was the beast who climbed on the bed on all fours, swaying his hips and licking his lips. Suddenly he sat down and straddled Kris’ shoulders so
that enormous bulge was positioned right in front of his face. “Lick it,” he commanded, his eyes so
dark with lust that they looked navy blue.

Oh fuck yeah! Kris opened his mouth and touched his tongue to the hot leather. A garbled sound of
pleasure came from the back of his throat as he swirled and lapped at the swollen cock beneath the
soft material, and though Adam hadn’t said to, Kris found himself mouthing and sucking it as well.
He couldn’t get enough of the smell, the taste of precum, sweat and leather all mixed together in an
aphrodisiac made just for him. He heard a gasp, looked up and saw dark gray shadow hiding the
blue eyes that were closed in ecstasy. “Yesss,” Adam hissed. Without opening his eyes he reached
down, unzipped his pants while leaving the button fastened and pulled out his dick. “Suck.”

Kris groaned loudly in want and did as he was told. He sucked. He sucked hard and long and fast,
accepting every thrust down his throat with relish until his mouth was flooded with so much cum that
he choked on it.

“Mmmm…you’re all messy, rabbit,” Adam crooned as he lowered himself and licked Kris’ face
clean. “And now comes the real fun.”

What followed those words was the most incredible combination of tenderness and wickedness that
Kris had ever experienced. Hands still gripping the bed frame, he didn’t know whether to shout ‘I
love you,’ or ‘oh god yes, give me more!’ His body was a plaything and a temple at the same time as
Adam worked him over, alternately caressing him with soft leather palms and pricking him
everywhere with the spikes, which were sharp enough to sting without breaking skin. In addition to
that, he was called both angel and rabbit, and it was turning him upside down with emotions. When
he couldn’t stand it a minute longer, he begged and pleaded for permission to let go of the bed, and
as soon as Adam relented, Kris immediately started jerking off.

“More?”


“More?”

“Yes!” The metal points dug harder and harder into Kris’ thighs, and they were both panting,
watching, moaning, licking their dry lips. Adam’s hands shook a little as he continued to ask.

“More?”

“Yes! Yes!” A fraction of added pressure took him over the edge and he came with a shout, his body
convulsing, cum spurting onto his hand and belly.

Adam removed the spikes at once and stared at the marks he’d made. “Wow,” he whispered.

“Oh god…oh god…”

“Angel, are you okay?” Adam asked in a worried tone as he scrambled up next to Kris.

“Perfect, I’m perfect,” he answered through his labored breathing, “that was amazing… amazing.”

Adam smiled and kissed him gently. “How about a bath?”

“Perfect.”
Kris was very thankful that his boyfriend was so strong, because he didn’t think he could move and was more than happy to be carried to the bathtub after Adam had filled it with hot water and bubbles. Kris let himself be pampered, let Adam sponge him and clean him as they soaked and relaxed together.

“Adam?”

“Yeah?”

“Thank you.” I can't believe he did all that, made so much effort just to please me.

“You are so welcome.” He filled up the sponge again and squeezed it over Kris’ chest. “I have one favor to ask you in return.”

“Anything.”

“Will you come with me on Friday to that designer’s shop? I want to apply for a job.”

“Of course I will, my brave man.”

“Mmmm. Love you, angel.”

“Love you, too, baby.”

Chapter 50

Adam awoke to a most unusual sound. At first he thought it was Fifi scratching the bed, but no, that couldn’t be right. She’s in her room, unless Kris already let her out. When he opened his eyes, he thought that he must dreaming because there was a real live angel in his room. A halo of light was glowing like an aura around the breathtaking form of a naked man standing in front of the window. He couldn’t make out the angel’s face or features, just a silhouette, a chiseled god that was holding something… something that was making that scratching sound. Adam shook his head and tried to clear his sleep-fogged brain. “Angel?”

“Good morning, lover.”

“Kris.” Of course it’s Kris, silly. And he is an angel. The beautiful man moved away from the window to reveal sunshine pouring in through the trees outside. Adam blinked a few times as he watched his boyfriend climb up onto the bed. “You’re stunning, you know that?” he said, grinning widely and feeling proud that he was with such a gorgeous creature.

“Hmmm. Thank you,” said Kris. A hint of a blush was visible on his cheeks when he leaned down to press a brief kiss to Adam’s lips. “I could say the same about you,” he said as he set down a small pad of paper and a pencil on the nightstand before snuggling up to Adam.

“Was that you making the scratching sounds? Are you writing something?” Now he’s really blushing.
Kris buried his face into the crook of Adam’s neck and mumbled, “no, not writing… drawing.”

Adam remembered that Kris had sketched the angel on his bracelet and became excited because he just knew there must be hidden talent there. “Really? What were you drawing, can I see it?” He pulled back a bit so he could see his lover’s face; it was definitely flushed and he was wearing a sheepish grin. “Are you shy about it? I promise I…wait…” It had just occurred to him that Kris might have been sketching him as he slept. “Were you drawing me?”

Kris gave a tiny nod and bit his lower lip. “I…I don’t know if it’s any good, but you just looked so beautiful, so peaceful…I’m not sure what came over me,” he said quietly, looking at the pillow instead of Adam.

How is it that I love him more each day? A soft smile curled up the side of Adam’s mouth and he put a finger under that sweet man’s chin and lifted it up. “You don’t have to show me if you don’t want to. I’d love to see it, but it’s up to you. Thank you anyway for wanting to draw me.” He pulled Kris into his arms again and began to kiss him tenderly. No man had ever done something like that for Adam. For years he’d struggled with his self-confidence about his appearance until he was able to perfect it into something that corresponded with his growing reputation as a man-eater slash entertainer, an unapproachable, larger than life figure that intimidated and impressed.

Gone was the frightened, freckled boy who’d been terrorized and abused. Only his family and Alisan had ever seen him without his mask on, and he still had moments of self-consciousness around Kris when he was bare of all products and style. The idea that Kris thought Adam was beautiful enough like this to be worthy of drawing made his heart swell with so much love that a few tears gathered in the corners of his eyes as they kissed.

After a minute or two, their lips finally parted with a few small pecks. Adam gazed into his lover’s brown eyes as he ran his thumb across Kris’ bottom lip, and a little voice suddenly whispered in his head. It’s time. Don’t be frightened…say it now before you lose your nerve. “Angel…I want to…” He swallowed thickly and tried to suppress the jitters that were beginning to crawl throughout his body.

“What is it? Are you okay?” asked Kris with furrowed brows.

“Yes…I think I’m ready to…you know, um…my dreams?” He couldn’t say it any other way; it was hard enough to say it at all and he had to clasp his hands together around Kris to keep them from shaking.

A look of dawning realization slowly spread on Kris’ face like a sunrise reaching all the corners of the sky. “Wow;” he breathed in an awestruck tone. “You mean…right now?”

“No!” Adam said loudly, his eyes wide and surprised. “Sorry…sorry.” He crushed Kris to his body and spoke to the little blue lamp on the bedside table, softly. “No… but… Sunday? During the day, I don’t want it to be at night. Is that…is that okay?” Adam knew that he was trembling but he couldn’t help it. It’ll be all right. Kris will take care of you.

“Oh my Adam, of course it’s okay,” Kris murmured as he caressed Adam’s back. “But…well, it’s an awful lot to take on, don’t you think? I mean you want to go apply for a job today, and then tomorrow is Fifi’s class again and…I’m not saying you can’t handle all of that, I just care about you is all.”
Kris grew silent for a minute and Adam tried to absorb these words. He was right, of course, it was a lot to attempt all in one weekend, but Adam couldn’t ignore the sense that the universe was nudging him forward to take this step. He was about to say as much when Kris started to speak again.

“I hope that you aren’t saying this because you feel pressured by me.”

“No, god no,” said Adam emphatically. “Come on, sit up with me so I can look at you,” he said, because he felt he could all of a sudden. After they were seated across cross-legged, knees touching and hands threaded together, Adam continued. “I can’t explain it, but it just feels right to me, Kris,” he said, feeling a little calmer now. “I have to go with this and it has nothing to do with you pressuring me, because you haven’t…you’ve never done that, okay?” He peered intently into that worried face until he saw it relax.

“Okay,” Kris responded, squeezing Adam’s hands and smiling.

“Okay,” Adam repeated. “Alright then…then that’s what we’ll do…on Sunday. I don’t have work that night and nothing else is going on that day, so…” Oh my god, I’m really going to do it…it’s going to happen…jesus.

Kris looked at him with watery eyes that were radiating waves of adoration straight into Adam’s heart. “You’re amazing. Make love to me right now and to hell with breakfast and the gym and everything else,” he gushed as he wiped his eyes and climbed onto Adam’s lap.

Adam chuckled, gathering up his angel and kissing him on the nose. “I love your enthusiasm, baby, but I’ve got to pee and I’m sure Fifi does, too. Plus she’s probably starving. Awww don’t pout,” he said when Kris’ lower lip turned out, “meet me back here in fifteen minutes and I’ll show you exactly how much I love you.” He pressed their lips together briefly and mentally gave himself a pat on the back for being brave.

However, the first thing that they did after taking care of their bodily needs and Fifi’s hungry belly was to look at Kris’ drawing of Adam. While the little pup jumped around on the bed attacking a plastic hamburger, the couple sat side by side with the pad of paper held between them. There on the page was Adam’s head and face depicted in detail, lying on the suggestion of a pillow with the curve of his neck and shoulder sketched in roughly. Kris had captured the proportions almost perfectly and somehow had even managed to convey the appearance of freckles without drawing too much attention to them. But even more amazing to Adam than the technical accuracy was the expression on his face of deep serenity. His lips were almost smiling.

Do I smile in my sleep?

That didn’t really matter though, because this was how Kris had seen him; this was Adam through Kris’ eyes, and he was beautiful. “Kris…this is just incredible,” he said with his mouth slightly open.

“You like it?” asked Kris, chewing on his bottom lip again and fidgeting with the edge of the comforter.

“Like it? I love it. Baby, you’ve got some serious talent here and I…I didn’t know that I looked like that,” he said softly. He traced a finger across the long lashes fanned out on his replicated face and heard his mother’s voice telling him how handsome he was at age nine. “Can I have this?” I want to put it in my grandfather’s box.

Kris beamed, looking pleased with himself and nodded. “Of course you can. I’m really glad you like it. Maybe I’ll do more sometime,” he said as he scratched behind Fifi’s ears. She licked his hand and tried to settle in his lap, but Adam picked her up and put her down on the floor. “Sit,” he commanded firmly, praising her when she did so.
“Come,” he whispered to Kris, and began to make good on his promise to show his angel exactly how much he was loved.

***

Although Kris had suggested that they stay in bed until Adam was ready to go apply for the job downtown, Adam really felt the need to exercise today. Routine was very important to him, and with all the challenging things about to take place in the next few days he didn’t want to deviate from something that helped him feel in control. So after a quick breakfast and a walk around the block with Fifi, the couple headed out to the gym.

Once they arrived, they went to the locker room and then parted ways, Kris to the cardio and weight area and Adam to the punching bag. He did a few stretches, bounced on his toes and began to lay into the tough leather. *Yes, this is good…good.* With every strike and kick he felt his brain relax as if his neural pathways were expanding, unclogging so that thoughts could flow more easily. *Gonna get a day job...yeah.*

Adam would be fooling himself if he said he wasn’t nervous about applying for the job; he was terrified actually, but there was that inexplicable something that kept drawing his mind back to the jacket and to the shop itself. Even the name, ‘Sew Your Soul’ was alluring in a mysterious way. And just as it had been this morning with his sudden decision to act on his fantasy with Kris, he felt that his steps were being guided somehow. Although he was generally a make your own destiny kind of person, he also believed in fate. Fate had led him to his angel, he was sure of it, and he wasn’t about to dismiss a chance at something else that might be really good for him despite its obvious potential for disaster.

Adam was in the zone, pumping himself up for the challenge that awaited him later that day and he was so into it that he lost track of the time. *Not going to let them win. I can get a job if I want to.* All of a sudden Kris was on the other side of the bag, his hard muscles glistening and sweat dripping from his hair. He was wearing a feral kind of grin as he licked the perspiration from his upper lip. It was the same kind of look he always had when he saw Adam working out. *God he’s so fucking sexy.* Adam threw a few more punches just to show off and then shook his head so that drops of sweat flew everywhere.

“Hot,” said Kris with another swipe of his tongue across those gorgeous lips.

The only problem with going to the gym together was that fucking in public was generally frowned upon. *Such a shame.* Adam bent over and picked up his towel, making sure to give Kris a good view of his ass as he did so.

“Tease.”

“Don’t you know it,” Adam responded with a wink. *I feel good. I can do this day job thing. Sure about that, Lambert? Yes, you dick, now go away.*

***
Fashion. Adam loved it. As he, Kris and Fifi walked downtown amidst other shoppers all enjoying
the warm afternoon sunshine, he couldn’t help but stop in his favorite stores to peruse new items and
fawn over clothes that he couldn’t justify dropping a crapload of money on. *Love this shirt. Funny
though, never would've considered buying it a few months ago.* Adam was discovering that his tastes
were changing a little. This had confused him greatly at first, but after one particularly illuminating
therapy session, it had all made sense.

In the process of developing his mask all those years ago, Adam had learned to appreciate clothing
and makeup and how they could transform him into anything, but now it was sometimes difficult to
figure out if he liked those things genuinely or if he was just stuck in the of habit of hiding himself
from the world. Sheila had told him that he’d need to re-evaluate everything in order to discover his
ture preferences, and he was finding that while he really did love dressing up and glamming out, he
was also attracted to clothes that were just fun and quirky. In addition, his closet was now free of the
custom-made sex pants and filled with much a wider variety of styles.

“What do you think of this?” he asked Kris, holding up a black and white striped t-shirt with a huge
pair of rainbow colored lips on the front.

Kris was trying to readjust Fifi in the backpack he was carrying so that she could stick her head and
paws out easier. “Huh? Oh hey, lips!” he said brightly when he looked up. “That’s cool, and it gives
me an excuse to kiss your chest.”

Adam chuckled at his boyfriend’s waggling eyebrows and whispered, “You never need an excuse.”
He paid for the shirt and they continued on their way to the designer’s shop. As he’d expected, as
soon as they were a block away from it, Adam’s nerves kicked into high gear and he squeezed Kris’
hand tightly. “It’s going to be fine,” he mumbled to himself.

Kris squeezed back and nodded. “Yes it is.”

When they arrived at the display window of Sew Your Soul, Adam was once again taken in by the
stunning jacket and that mystical sense of future emanating from it, as if he knew it would play a role
in his life somehow. The help wanted sign was still in the window and he felt a mixture of
trepidation and relief at that. *Go in there. Go on. “How about we let Fifi out to pee before we go in?”*
he suggested, because he wanted her to be comfortable and not at all because he was stalling. *I’m
not.*

“Good idea,” Kris replied, setting down the backpack. He snapped on Fifi’s leash and let her do her
business on a nearby hydrant. When she was finished, Kris returned her to the backpack. “Ready?”

*No. “Yes.”* He grasped Kris by the hand and they walked in. Adam’s heart was surely trying to
escape his chest with all of its mad pounding, as if it could make a hole, jump out and run away just
like he wanted to do right now. *Breathe...you’re just applying, you might not even get the job...just
chill.* There were a few customers in the store but no sign of the clerk he’d been expecting to see.
“Let’s just look around for a few minutes.”

It was a single room shop with dark cherry wood tables outlining the walls, each displaying one or
two garments along with a few accessories. The only way to describe the designer’s taste was
eclectic. While some of the clothing wouldn’t be out of place at a rock concert or on a dance floor,
Adam could envision himself wearing a few of the pieces up on stage, while others would be
suitable for casual strolls around town. It was pretty much his idea of heaven. “Damn,” he muttered
upon picking up a leather cuff detailed with a swirl of rhinestones.
“Like a kid in a candy store,” chuckled Kris as Adam pulled him from one table to another.

A young woman glanced up as they approached yet another display and saw Fifi. “Cute puppy,” she said. “Can I pet her?”

“Of course,” Kris replied, turning a bit so that she could reach Fifi’s little head poking out of the bag.

Adam smiled, glad that he’d decided to bring their pet along because it made him feel more comfortable to have her nearby. With all the wonderful clothing eye candy, however, he’d almost forgotten the reason for this visit. The woman thanked them and moved on, and as Adam’s eyes followed her briefly, he noted that the employee had appeared. Dressed in a long sleeved black shirt and black skinny jeans, he entered from a door in the back and took up his post at the counter. Adam puffed out a nervous breath, trying to remember Sheila’s advice to take things one step at a time. *All I have to do is fill out a form, that’s all.* “Kris,” he said quietly, tilting his head in the direction of the man.

“Hmm? Oh hey, it’s Tommy! I didn’t know he worked here!”

Adam stared at Kris. “Wait, what? You know him?”

“Yes, that’s Matt’s new roommate. Oh man, this is so awesome! Tommy is such a great guy and I just know you’ll like him. He’s really friendly and easy going.”

“But, but…” Adam stuttered, not sure why he was so surprised at such a simple coincidence. *This is a good thing. Kris knows him and likes him.* Yes, it was a good thing, because it also meant that the impending interaction would be less awkward. He sighed, gave his best attempt at appearing relaxed and led the way to the back of the room.

When Tommy saw Kris he grinned in recognition, but a moment later his thin brows furrowed and he looked back and forth between the two men holding hands, no doubt trying to connect them in his mind. The couple approached, Kris smiling and reaching out to shake Tommy’s hand while Adam debated if he should do the same. He finally decided he’d better show some good manners if he wanted a job here. *Take control of the situation…don’t be passive.* “Name’s Adam, and it looks like you know my boyfriend, Kris,” he said as he offered his slightly shaking hand, which Tommy accepted at once.

“For real?” said Tommy, now grinning at them both. “Excellent! Oh wait a minute, no shit…” He looked at Kris for a split second and then began to laugh. “That means you must’ve been the one to punch out that guy in front of the store,” he snickered. “I thought you looked a little familiar when you came to get your piano….nice right hook.”

They all chuckled, even Adam, who was starting to unclench his toes in his boots. “Thanks,” snorted Kris, “the guy had it coming. Anyway, nice store you’ve got here… still looking for help?”

Although he was glad that Kris was with him to break the ice, Adam didn’t want Tommy to get the impression that he couldn’t speak for himself. “I’m interested,” he said firmly, “if you’re hiring.”

“Absolutely, and I’ve seen you admiring that jacket in the window, excellent taste, that’s one of his best I think.”

“You’re not the designer?” Adam asked him.
Tommy brushed his fringe of black hair out of his face and leaned on the counter. “Nah, I just work up here on the retail end, but what he really needs is someone to assist him, someone to help sew prototypes, bounce ideas off of, cover the counter when I’m on breaks and get him coffee once in a while,” he finished with a smirk.

That sounded way better to Adam than what he’d expected, a little bit of time with the public but not too much and he’d get to assist whoever made these incredible clothes. Plus Tommy seemed decent enough. Kris was right about this guy, he’s pretty laid back, obviously gay. I like the two-toned hair…cool. “I can definitely sew, but…um, how old is your boss?” This was important. Adam knew that if the designer was old enough not to be his peer, it would be much easier to work with him.

“How, not sure, late thirties I’d guess. So, you wanna fill out an application?” He reached under the counter, brought up a form and pushed it towards Adam with dainty, blue tipped fingers.

“Late thirties, huh?” Adam reached over to pet Fifi as he considered this. “How many hours?”

“Twenty. Monday through Friday from ten to three, and the pay is good,” said Tommy as he scratched around one of the many earrings on his small, rather pointy ear.

That would mean he’d be working on Fridays while Kris was at home, and less time with his boyfriend was not something he was looking forward to. But he’d have time to himself, time to work in the studio while I’m not around. Adam glanced over at Kris, who was smiling encouragingly at him, and thought that he would probably appreciate some alone time. “Alright,” he told Tommy, pulling the paper towards him.

“Awesome. Something tells me you’d be perfect for the job. Here’s a pen.”

While Adam was filing out the application, he listened to Tommy chat with Kris about the local band he played in and tightened his jaw when he heard the guy invite them to come watch him perform and hang out afterwards. Things are getting more and more social. Don’t say yes, angel, just…give me some time.

“We’ll see,” said Kris in a friendly tone, “I’ll let you know.”

_Hmm, I’m a lucky man._ Adam finished up and returned the pen to Tommy. “So I guess I’ll be hearing from someone then?”

“Yes. I’ll let Alex take a look at this and one of us will call, probably next week.”

“Alright then…good.” _This is going to work out somehow, I can feel it._ Thinking once again about the fabulous garment in the window, Adam had one more question to ask before they left. “Would I get an employee discount?”

Tommy barked out a laugh and looked at him with a knowing smirk. “You must really want that jacket. Yeah man, you would…thirty percent off.”

_Fucking awesome._

“That went pretty well, don’t you think?” said Kris when they were back out on the street.

“Mhmm, nice guy…cute, too,” he responded without thinking.
“Hmph.”

Adam turned his head in time to see a small frown tugging down Kris’ mouth. *Now that’s really cute…jealous angel, awww.* “Hey you,” he said trying not to snicker, “you really think you’ve got anything to worry about?”

Kris looked at him for a moment as if he were really pondering that question, but suddenly he giggled in obvious realization that it was ludicrous to question Adam’s devotion.

“That’s what I thought,” he chuckled, pulling Kris to his side and kissing him on the temple.

***

Late that night as he lay in bed cuddling with Kris, Adam thought about how much his life had changed in the past several months. That evening he’d performed his set, hung out with Kris, Alisan and Matt afterwards and returned home tired but happy, content just to snuggle his angel after a little kissing. Less than six months ago, Adam would have been in his private room at the old club on a Friday night, probably fucking his fourth or fifth target by now. He’d have gone up to his apartment feeling satisfied afterward, ignoring whatever emptiness was clawing at his insides and telling himself he had the perfect life. “Amazing.”

Kris yawned into the darkness and pulled Adam’s arms tighter around his body. “What’s amazing?” he said sleepily.

“You are, angel,” he whispered, smiling softly when Kris hummed and mumbled something incoherent as he drifted off. *Sunday...damn.*

***

A beautiful angel with red wings was walking next to Adam, right there on the ground. They held hands as they strolled down an unmarked path. The angel’s wings were folded at the moment, but every once in a while the wind would catch them and cause them to unfurl like a two scarlet sails. It made them both giggle when that happened, but it never deterred them from continuing to walk together. “Are you a damaged freak?” the angel asked Adam at one point along the road. “I don’t know,” said Adam in response. Suddenly a squirrel that was leaping from branch to branch misjudged the distance and fell from a nearby tree right onto the angel’s shoulder. “Ouch!” he cried as the little nails scratched his flawless skin. He let go of Adam’s hand to check the wound, shook his head when he saw it wasn’t serious, and smiled. “Where were we?” They rejoined their hands and forged ahead. The scene grew foggy as the man dreaming it began to wake.

What a weird dream. Adam was trying to remember the details, but he became immediately distracted by the lack of a warm body next to him. His eyes snapped open and he pouted when he discovered that he was alone in bed because waking up with Kris in his arms was on his Top Five list of reasons to be happy in life. He stretched and yawned, wondering why Kris didn’t wake him. After pulling on a pair of sleep pants, he went to use the bathroom and just as he was finished drying his hands, he heard a loud clanging sound. “What the…” Adam opened the bathroom door and Fifi came bounding up to him at once, leaping and trying to jump into his arms. “Well good morning to
“Hi, baby!” he chirped, “thought I’d make you some…” Kris stopped speaking when the utensil was yanked away and frowned at the look of annoyance on Adam’s face. “Am I doing something wrong?”

“This is metal and that pan has special non-stick coating on it,” he said sternly as he waved the spatula around, irritated at the lack of common sense being displayed here. Judging by his expression of confusion, it didn’t seem like Kris was getting the message. “If you use this it’ll scratch the coating off and then things will burn,” Adam explained in exasperation because surely that much should be obvious to anyone. He saw the bowl of whisked eggs next to the stove and was thankful that Kris hadn’t started cooking yet.

“Sorry,” said Kris calmly as he turned off the burner, “I just wanted to try and make you breakfast for once.”

“You should’ve asked me first, then I could’ve shown you what to use,” said Adam, still irked. He wasn’t used to other people using his stuff and it made him uneasy.

Kris crossed his arms and leaned against the counter, one brow quirked up as he responded. “Well how is it going to be a surprise if I ask you first?”

He tried to think of a good response to that, but he couldn’t come up with one. Fuck, why am I being such an ass about this? He didn’t mean any harm. It’s just a dumb pan. Adam sighed, set the spatula on the counter and pinched the bridge of his nose, suddenly feeling drained. “Sorry. That was stupid, I’m sorry, Kris,” he said, dropping his head and wondering how many more times this would happen as he tried to navigate the daily adjustments of living with another person. If Sheila had been there, she would have told him it was about control and how it felt to have to give some of that up. A warm hand settled on his shoulder and he peered up into Kris’ smiling face.

“It’s fine. We’ll figure things out. It’s just going to take some time to get used to. In the meantime, maybe you should make me a list of what utensils go with what pans,” he joked.

It was glaringly obvious that although Kris had lots of experience in handling these kinds of situations, Adam had none at all. That’s what happens when you isolate yourself, Lambert. What happened to those lovely people skills you used to have when you were young, hmmm? You wouldn’t have been so upset about a fucking pan back then. Shut up, I’m doing the best I can. Adam drew Kris into a wordless hug as he fought off the hook trying to pull him down into a quagmire of self-criticism.

“Hey, are you all right?” asked Kris, squeezing Adam around the middle.

“It’s just…you’re so good at this stuff and I suck at it,” he mumbled.

“You don’t suck, you’re just new at it. Cut yourself some slack, alright?”

Adam suddenly remembered the cooking analogy and cast about for an appropriate recipe to help
him see the big picture of learning, but he wasn’t having much luck. *Still just a damaged—stop it!*

*Plenty of people argue about things like this, right?*

Kris stepped back a little and smirked. “Besides, you’re not the only one trying new things. If that had happened before I met you, I probably would’ve burst into tears or something.”

“For real?” he asked. Kris’ nod in reply made Adam feel a bit better, like he wasn’t alone in struggling.

“Yep, but if you’d started yelling at me a minute ago I would’ve done my best to yell back,” he chuckled.

The thought of his sweet angel red faced and shouting just didn’t compute somehow, but Adam wouldn’t put it past him. “You’d have every right to,” he said wearily. This is not how he’d wanted this day to start out. It was supposed to be the perfect day, and now…

“I’m not worried, baby. Forever is a long time to sort all this out,” Kris said as he pressed a kiss to Adam’s cheek. “Now, why don’t you show me how to make these eggs so that I can surprise you next time?”

“Forever? Hmmm, yeah, I like the sound of that,” Adam returned, his mind drifting far away from breakfast as he escaped to a happy future with Kris that stretched for miles and miles in his head. *Forever…* He started to envision the two of them aged and wrinkled, sitting in a pair of rocking chairs on a porch and laughing about the good old days when they were young and foolish. *I wonder if Kris’ dad would make us matching chairs?*

Kris was saying something but Adam was too caught up in his daydream to hear him. However, he’d have to be dead not to notice the spit slicked hand that had just reached around from behind and slid down the front of his sleep pants. “Kris!” he gasped in surprise.

Kris giggled as he began to fondle Adam’s semi-hard shaft. “Had to get your attention somehow, didn’t I? But now that I’m at it…”

Adam moaned and slumped forward to lean on the counter while Kris continued to stroke him, working the saliva up and down and adding a little twist at the base every so often. It felt so good that he was having a difficult time keeping his knees from buckling, and the sudden addition of Kris’ other hand creeping down his naked ass wasn’t helping.

*Dingaling! Dingaling!* Shit, why the hell did I teach her to ring that stupid bell?

Kris began to laugh loudly. “Nature calls!” he cackled, removing his hands despite Adam’s protests. “Don’t move, I’ll be right back.” After smacking Adam playfully on the ass, he went to open the sliding door for Fifi.

Now that he was all riled up, Adam couldn’t hold back from picking up where Kris left off, and he was grateful that the window blinds were still closed as he began to pump his Dick. With one hand on the counter for support, he closed his eyes and let his mouth fall open, groaning with the build up of tingling pleasure, working himself faster and faster.

“Heyyyyy, I think I told you not to move,” Kris pouted when he came back into the kitchen. He took Adam by the shoulders and pushed him up against the refrigerator, snickering that the movement had done nothing to deter him from jerking off. “Let it go baby, and I’ll give you a much better happy
ending than you can give yourself.”

*Now that’s convincing.* “Hurry…please,” Adam said as he pushed his pants down and let them fall to his ankles.

“Mmmm, breakfast of champions,” said Kris with a sly grin. He dropped to his knees, gazed up at Adam and opened wide.

Quivering and moaning, Adam tried to suppress the urge to slam into Kris’ mouth, but he was too far gone and he quickly wound his fingers into short brown hair, yanking it hard. “Oh god,” he panted when he felt moist heat envelop his cock along with a soft, slippery tongue flickering and teasing. He had every intention of fucking that gorgeous mouth, but Kris pinned his hips to the fridge and did the work for him. All he could do was grip the strands in his fingers and hold on as his lover bobbed, sucked and slurped him like a man drunk on passion.

A few more guttural cries and Adam threw his head back, banging it hard on the freezer behind him as he came down Kris’ throat with a shudder. “Fuck.” *Yeah…definitely a better way to start the day.*

***

The couple let Fifi stay outside for a while since she seemed to be having so much fun pretending that she was the world’s foremost squirrel catcher. The sun was hidden behind large puffs of clouds, but it was still warm enough that she didn’t need a sweater, and she was working up plenty of heat tearing across the little yard after the crafty rodents that continued to escape her.

Adam and Kris had enjoyed a pretty decent breakfast of scrambled eggs a la Kris (with a little help), had showered and shaved and were now cuddled up on the couch watching Fifi wear herself out. After such a busy day yesterday with the puppy class, more unpacking and work, it would’ve been nice just to laze around in their boxer shorts all day, but Adam kept thinking about what was to come and how it would happen. He was nervous, and he knew that the first time wouldn’t be like all the crazy dreams he’d had where his lover was pounding into him. “What are you going to do if I have a flashback?” he suddenly asked.

“Hmm, well, I guess the same thing I’d do when you’ve had one in the past.”

“Do you think maybe… I don’t know, maybe we should have some ice in the bedroom or at least a few cool cloths?” He felt embarrassed to be suggesting these things, but it was a small price to pay for being prepared.

“That’s not a bad idea,” said Kris, tilting his head up from its place on Adam’s bare chest.

Adam was having a hard time pushing away the shame that had been lingering ever since he’d decided to bottom, shame that this had to be such a big ordeal and that he might ‘fail.’ At the same time, the incarnation of bravery sitting on his shoulder was singing at the top of its lungs, proudly declaring that Adam Lambert was a courageous soul. The two voices were making quite a racket and it was giving him a headache. *I just need some peace and quiet.* “Angel, will you sing me something?”

“Course I will.” Kris extricated himself from Adam’s arms and went into the studio to get his guitar.
“Alright, what do you want to hear?” he asked when he got back and sat on the couch.

“It doesn’t really matter, just something soothing I guess. My head feels all jumbled.”

Kris scratched at the back of his neck the way he did when he was shy or uncertain. “Baby, you know we don’t have to—”

“No, Kris, please don’t do that, okay? I’m going to be nervous about it no matter if it’s today or fifty years from now.” He sat up straighter and cupped his boyfriend’s smooth face. “I want it to be today,” he murmured.

“Okay,” said Kris softly, leaning in for a kiss.

Their lips touched gently a few times and then Adam got comfortable, ready for the music to politely escort his anxiety to the nearest exit. He had to giggle just a little bit when Kris started strumming and singing ‘Ain’t No Sunshine When She’s Gone.’ “So I’m a woman now, huh?” he smirked and laughed again when Kris changed the lyrics to ‘he.’

Kris winked and continued to sing, his eyes closing as he got into it, and Adam found himself getting lost in watching him. *I love the way his nose scrunches up when he hits those notes…and that crooked mouth…so cute.* Such an even tune, but Kris made it his own, weaving in gradual crescendos, adding dramatic pauses and changing the pitch to make his voice crack just right. The combination of that sweet voice and the clean melody echoing throughout the room was the perfect sedative for Adam’s rattling nerves. He felt his muscles relax as he sank back into the couch, breathing deeply and allowing his eyelids to droop.

The song finally ended but Kris kept humming for a minute after setting down his guitar. When at last all was silent, Adam opened his eyes to find his lover smiling at him. “I think Fifi is ready for a nap,” said Kris.

They both looked over and saw the little pup sprawled out on the ground in the middle of the yard. “I guess the squirrels got the best of her,” Adam chuckled quietly. He was still feeling very mellow, as if someone was conducting his biorhythms and had brought the volume and tempo down to a hushed legato.

“Why don’t you put her in her room for a nap, and I’ll meet you in ours.”

“Yes,” said Adam, “yes.” Trying to hold on to the calm, he went to retrieve poor Fifi all tuckered out after her outdoor adventures while Kris went into the kitchen for some ice. When Adam picked her up and cuddled her to his body, she blinked at him sleepily and wagged her tail once. “Hey you sweet thing.” She barely moved when he laid her down in her dog bed except to let out one of those adorable puppy yawns that were too cute to be legal. After closing the door to the utility room, Adam walked down the short hallway into the bedroom. *Kris is going to take care of you.*

He didn’t know what he’d been expecting when he walked in, but the sight of his boyfriend still wearing shorts and waiting for him on the bed was comforting because it helped him feel more ‘normal’ about this. The bucket of ice on the nightstand next to a bottle of lube was the only thing indicating that this wasn’t just any old day.

Kris stood up and immediately pulled Adam into a hug. “You’re trembling.”

“Am I?” Adam squeezed and released his fists a few times and then flicked his fingers in an attempt
to shake off his jitters. *Gonna be okay.*

“Yes you are. Come here.” Kris put his hands on Adam’s cheeks and drew him in until their lips met.

Adam kissed him like he was trying to taste love and use it as a calming agent, but all he felt rising up inside was the need to be in control, and he started walking them to the bed as they embraced. When they reached Adam’s side (the one farthest from the window), he pushed Kris onto his back and began to climb on top of him. “Angel, let me…”

“Do whatever you want, baby.”

What he wanted was to feel like he was running things for a while. He brought their mouths together again and reached between them to palm Kris’ growing erection. “Love you…love you,” he whispered in between kisses, rubbing hard circles now and moaning when he felt wetness seep through the thin cotton of Kris’ boxers.

“Adam…love…oh god…”

With increasing speed he stroked his lover to get him off, but then a thought struck him right between the eyes. *Wait, wait…this isn’t right. It’s not supposed to be like this.* He quickly rolled off and onto his back, panting and reminding himself that this was about submission, not control. He wanted to submit to his lover. He wanted to. Adam scrambled over to Kris and gazed down at him. With an effort to keep his voice from wavering, he said the words that would make it all happen. “Make love to me, please angel, do it your way. I…I want to give myself to you.”

All at once the hazed arousal in Kris’ eyes transformed into shining love. “You’re amazing,” he breathed, “amazing. Okay, if that’s what you want, then…” He sat up, took Adam by the hand and guided him to the middle of the bed. “Lie back and let me love you,” he said with an affectionate smile as he positioned a pillow under ebony hair.

Every action now was going to lead up to the one thing that Adam had guarded against for just over ten years. Vibrant blue met coffee brown. “I trust you.”

“I know.”

When Kris’ lips touched Adam’s this time, there was no urgency behind them. He took it slow and Adam let himself be kissed, his mouth open and receptive to tender licks and gentle presses. *I’m his…tonight I’m his.* All of Adam’s thoughts were centered on absorbing the sensations - the air meeting his nakedness after his shorts were removed, the feel of skin on skin as bodies moved and the thrill of arousal when their lengths brushed together; he wanted to drown in it so that no fear or apprehension remained. It wasn’t easy, but every time an unwanted emotion surfaced, he tried to push it aside to get back to the love and safety that he knew was real.

Kris’ mouth was drifting, dropping miniscule kisses along Adam’s jaw and down his throat. “Freckles,” he whispered as he tongued them randomly, one on Adam’s chest then another on his shoulder.

It was so quiet.

The ice melted and shifted in the bucket.
Soft lips made delicate clicks on Adam’s skin.

Tiny hitches of breaths and hushed moans floated into the air.

Nothing about this moment was similar to the horror that he’d faced.

*Let go. Let go.*

A breath of warm air on his hipbone caused him to shiver and open his legs so that Kris could settle in between them. “Kris.”

“Right here, baby,” he said, now working his way down until he was low enough to lick a pale inner thigh.

The slick heat felt incredible in such a sensitive spot and Adam didn’t hesitate to expose himself even more because this at least was familiar. Kris began to lap at Adam’s balls and then sucked one into his mouth, rolling it around and around and drawing a long, throaty moan from Adam. “Feels so good…so good…” Another few swirls and his lover moved on to explore every inch of Adam’s hard length, the soft skin of the head moistened with precum, that freckle just beneath the rim, the vein pulsing with arousal - nothing went unnoticed by Kris’ mouth.

Adam gave it up, just let his body relax into the pleasure and tender care as Kris pushed his knees back, dipping into his entrance with that sensual pink tongue. “Ohhh …yesss,” he breathed, reaching down to slip his fingers into the fine brown locks he loved so much. “More…more.” Kris responded by spreading Adam’s cheeks as wide as they’d go and licked long swaths across his hole, bathing his puckered skin again and again until Adam began to pant and tug at Kris’ hair. Abruptly, he needed to have his lover’s fingers inside him. Such a strange urge and one he’d never felt before he met Kris, but he couldn’t deny it, and when he asked for them Kris sat back and reached for the lube on the nightstand.

“Do it like before…come up here and kiss me, love me.” Adam reached out, longing to feel that incredible body pressed up to his.

Just as he’d done several times since moving in together, Kris made love to Adam with his fingers, locked in a passionate embrace and whispering words of devotion as he slid first one, then two and finally three digits slowly in and out.

“There, oh god right there,” Adam moaned when those fingers curled and touched him deep inside. His lungs were on fire with labored breathing, each gasp punctuated by bliss even as he felt Kris open him, prepare him for what he knew was coming next. He yearned for it. *I’m ready.* “Angel,” Somehow the word conveyed everything all by itself. Two syllables were about to change his life forever.

Maybe it was the tone or just a sense of anticipation, but when Kris heard his nickname, he nodded and rolled Adam fully onto his back. “Listen to me,” he said, combing his fingers through Adam’s hair and gazing at him lovingly. “You tell me when to go or stop, we don’t even have to go all the way…it’s completely up to you, alright?”

“Alright.” *My eyes are wide, I can feel them.* Kris looked at him for another moment and then kissed him deeply as if he were trying to soothe Adam’s suddenly racing heart. After a last press of the lips, he slid down and positioned himself on his knees in between Adam’s open legs. He swallowed and closed his eyes briefly, making Adam wonder how he must be feeling right now. *Is he scared, too?*
“I know you won’t hurt me…I know that.” It was the last time he’d be able to think about Kris’ feelings until afterward, but for now he was pleased to see his lover’s face relax a little. Kris smiled. Adam did, too. And then it all began.

After slicking up with a generous amount of lube, Kris worked what felt like an entire bottle in and around Adam’s entrance with his fingers. Everything was so wet and slippery that when the tip finally made contact, Adam could already tell that this would be less painful than he’d always feared. However, that didn’t stop his brain from bombarding him with lies, causing his breathing to come in short puffs and his eyes to begin darting all over the place.

“Adam, look at me,” said Kris. He reached up to touch Adam’s face. “Look at my eyes and don’t stop. I want you to stare right into them.”

“Eyes, yes.” It was so confusing. While his body ached to be filled up, his brain was telling him not to allow it. *Focus. Eyes. Brown. Love. Angel.* He stared and stared. It seemed like hours, but finally he took a deep, shuddering breath and nodded as something clicked, like a gate opening in his mind telling him that it was okay.

“Do that again, baby, take another breath just like that, don’t stop looking at me,” said Kris gently. “Try to relax your muscles as much as you can.”

Adam breathed.

Kris pushed.

Adam’s first instinct was to clench, but he forced himself to let go as just the very tip entered his body. “Stop.” It felt full, like fingers, but smoother and broader. His eyes started to water because he was scared that if he blinked, if he lost eye contact with Kris for one second then he’d fall apart and be vulnerable to the lies again. *He loves you and it doesn’t hurt.* “Go.”

A serene confidence seemed to settle into those beautiful brown eyes and Kris grinned widely. “I love you,” he said. “Deep breath.”

This shift made a difference, and as Adam took air into his lungs he felt strength emanating from Kris that helped his body cease fighting as if it wanted to be claimed. “Keep going.”

Inch by inch, Kris moved his hips forward until the head of his length was almost all the way in. “This will be the widest stretch, you might feel just a tiny little burn. Are you ready?”

“Yes.” Eyes never wavering, Adam pushed all of the breath out of his body. It was a pinch, nothing more and then the rim passed and Kris was in, but the discomfort brought on a flash of the memory of pain and fear and he gasped. “Angel!”

“You’re not looking at me, baby, focus, feel my hands on your skin,” said Kris calmly as he reached up to cup Adam’s face.

“Angel, angel…” Adam repeated the name several times, studying the patterns of black and brown in Kris’ eyes and desperately trying to hold off the memories. One hand left his cheek and returned with an ice-cold touch. It was just enough to snap him back into the moment. *It’s okay…it’s okay.* Gradually his breathing slowed and his eyes lost their frightened look.
Kris’ forehead creased with worry. “Do you want to stop now? It’s totally fine if you do.”

Adam considered it for a moment, but suddenly he was struck by the fact that Kris was inside of him and it completely blew him away. “Oh my god…you’re inside me…you’re…” The emotions beginning to flood his being made it impossible to speak another word, and all he could do was grab Kris by the hips to show that he wanted to continue.

Kris’ whole body seemed to light up with a bright, beaming smile. “God, I love you so much,” he said with such intensity that it only added to the deep sense of joy, pride and connection that was washing Adam clean of fear.

Tears began to sting his eyes as Kris filled him deeper and deeper until finally their bodies were flush, their lips touched and Adam felt safe to break eye contact at last as they kissed. He wrapped his legs around his man and slowly but surely the strange desire to push and clench faded away. When they ran out of air, they just stared at each other with wet eyes and silly grins on their faces, but after a while they both felt the urge to move.

Kris pulled out ever so slightly and slid back in, and that’s when it started to feel really, really good.

“Whoa.” Not fingers, not tongue, not anything Adam had ever experienced could have prepared him for the sensations of pleasure rippling in places he never knew existed. “Do that again, angel.”

Kris chuckled softly. “I know, right? Feels pretty damn good, doesn’t it?”

But Adam didn’t want to talk about it, he wanted Kris to move and he told him so, which made the angel laugh as he set about complying. Slowly he withdrew almost all the way before entering Adam again.

“Oh my god.” As had happened the first time he’d been rimmed and fingered, Adam was kicking himself for waiting this long, even though he was sure it couldn’t have happened a moment sooner. “Again…more.”

It wasn’t the crazy sex of his dreams. No, it was unhurried and tender…and better because it was real. He couldn’t believe he’d been so afraid of something so beautiful and exquisite. Soon he was pulling Kris into his body with his hands and legs, basking in the physical and emotional bond forming between them, the cleaning of old wounds and the downright heaven of pressure touching him inside over and over.

They kissed, they moaned and whispered and declared their love with hands roaming and caressing skin as Kris eased into a gentle rhythm. It had taken a while, but now that things were feeling so good, Adam’s length was rigid and needy again. He let go of Kris and grasped his straining shaft between their bodies. It was crystal clear to him why Kris enjoyed this so much. “Angel, a little faster.”

That got a groan in response. No doubt it was difficult for Kris to hold back now that his fantasy was becoming a reality as well. He sped up a bit, squeezed his eyes shut and began to pant softly. “Adam…this is…” Measured thrusts. Shaking muscles.

Adam pumped himself rapidly and gasped every time his prostate was stimulated. “Faster.” A light slapping sound of skin on skin could be heard as Kris let go even more and drove harder with every stroke.
Deep inside both men, the sensual rapture was building, gathering like hundreds of fireworks hovering in the air just before they explode, so much potential energy and heat contained just waiting for the right moment to burst free. All at once Adam was there and his entire body seized around Kris, his nails and muscles and teeth digging into flesh and skin. He cried out for his angel, arching off the bed as his eyes rolled back and he shuddered from head to toe.

Kris came a second later with a shout, every inch of his body quaking with the final thrusts before he collapsed at last.

*Oh my god, he came inside me…his cum is in me right now…wow.*

Seed and sweat smeared their stomachs but Adam didn’t care. He was so in love, so connected and so proud of himself that he felt like running around the streets with a megaphone to announce it. They lay entwined for a long time until their breathing returned to normal.

After about five minutes, Kris propped up on one elbow and looked down at Adam. What could they say to each other after that? What words were sufficient to describe the profound bond that they felt? Adam had trusted, had overcome a long held fear and had given himself entirely to his lover who in turn took that gift, worshiped it for the treasure it was and then gave back one of his own.

A tear splashed onto Adam’s cheek from above, mixing with the wetness that was already there. “I know,” he said softly as he reached up to caress Kris’ cheek. “I know.”

*************************************************************************

**Note: The following scene is a repeat of the last one from Kris’ point of view.**

*************************************************************************

Kris went into the kitchen to get some ice while Adam took care of Fifi. As he loaded up a bucket, he prayed to god that they wouldn’t need it. *Please let this be okay for him.* As badly as he wanted this to happen, he couldn’t bear the thought of being a source of fear to his love. He walked into the bedroom, put down the bucket and sat on the bed. When Adam had first mentioned his decision to bottom, Kris had considered lighting candles and creating a romantic atmosphere, but the more he thought about it, the more he realized that this moment should feel as ‘normal’ as possible.

He didn’t have long to wait. Adam came in looking a little lost, and Kris got up to comfort him at once. *He’s so nervous.* “You’re trembling.”

“Am I?”

“Yes you are. Come here.” Kris pulled him close and tried to reassure him with a tender kiss, but he was surprised when Adam started to respond assertively, moving them towards the bed. *Control…this is all about control for him.* The backs of his legs hit the edge of the bed and then his body went down as Adam pushed him and began to crawl all over him.

“Angel, let me…”

“Do whatever you want, baby.” *Maybe he just needs to lead this whole thing.* Kris couldn’t deny that he was a little disappointed because he’d been looking forward to the whole process of making love to his boyfriend. *You can’t be selfish…it’s got to be the way he wants it.* He accepted this fact and relaxed into being kissed and caressed, moaning a little when Adam palmed his growing erection.
“Love you…love you,” Adam whispered in between kisses.

He wanted to say it back, but that large, skilled hand was rubbing hard circles now over and over, stealing Kris’ breath and words clean away. “Adam…love…oh god…” All other thoughts flew out of his brain; it felt so good that he was forgetting what they were supposed to be doing right now. More…more. He started to pant and moan, but suddenly Adam stopped and rolled off of him. It was a shock, and he almost protested out loud at the loss of hot pleasure, sucking in deep breaths and reminding himself that Adam was in charge and he’d just have to go with the flow. He never expected what came next.

Adam returned to his side and gazed down at him. “Make love to me, please angel, do it your way. I…I want to give myself to you.”

At those words Kris’ heart began to hurt and melt and explode and it was barely containable. Trying desperately not to burst into tears, he accepted the precious gift with every intent to cherish it. “You’re amazing,” he breathed, “amazing. Okay, if that’s what you want, then…” He sat up, took Adam by the hand and guided him to the middle of the bed. “Lie back and let me love you,” he said lovingly as he tucked a pillow under Adam’s head.

Their eyes locked for a moment. “I trust you.”

Oh my Adam, what did I do to deserve you?

“I know.”

Kris had never made love to someone like this before. Sure, he’d topped on request and he’d cared deeply for some of his past boyfriends, but this was entirely different. Adam was submitting to him completely despite his greatest fear, and Kris wanted every touch to be worthy of that trust.

The first soft kiss he pressed to those sweet lips set the tone of tender, unhurried love-making. Each lick, nibble and kiss was a word whispering his devotion to the incredible man beneath him. After wiggling out of his shorts and then slowly removing Adam’s, Kris took up his position on top for the first time. He didn’t feel power crazed or dominant as he’d experienced in his fantasies, he felt…like a lover. A quiet moan tumbled out when their lengths connected and suddenly, Kris needed to kiss every inch of his boyfriend’s skin.

Jaw, throat, chest…they were all covered with those magnificent little stars that he secretly felt were made just for him to kiss. “Freckles,” he whispered as he tongued them randomly, one on Adam’s chest then another on his shoulder. The quiet settled in like blanket, muffling all sounds except those made by his lips kissing pale skin, the ice shifting beside them, and the noises of love escaping their mouths. Little by little, he worked his way down all that beauty until he was settled in between Adam’s legs.

“Kris.”

“Right here, baby,” he said softly, moving even lower so that he could lick at those perfect thighs. Kris was pleased when Adam opened up even more to him. He’s comfortable, for now anyway. He bent his head and poked out his tongue to lap and suck at Adam’s balls because he knew from experience that it felt absolutely fantastic.

Adam moaned long and low, his breath coming faster as Kris moved on and took him into his mouth, trying to touch every inch of hard length, sucking, kissing, licking, careful not to miss a single freckle. It was getting a little bit torturous; his cock was rigid and it was taking effort not ravage his
lover at this point. *Keep it slow…slow.* He was thirsty for Adam, aching to be inside him as he pushed long legs back to expose the spot he craved to enter and he channeled all of that yearning into his tongue.

“Ohhh…yesss,” Adam breathed, reaching down to card his fingers through Kris’ hair. “More…more.”

The noises and moans went straight to Kris’ dick. *Oh god….help.* He parted Adam’s cheeks as far as he could and laid down long licks again and again, lapping and bathing the pink ring of muscle. Both of the men were groaning and panting now, but finally Adam asked for fingers and Kris sat up, gratefully reaching for the lube.

“Do it like before…come up here and kiss me, love me,” said Adam as he reached out, looking needy with just a hint of uncertainty.

*Breathe…breathe…slow.* Kris got control of himself and pulled his boyfriend into a loving embrace. He cleared his mind, focusing only on loving Adam with his fingers, kissing full lips and whispering words of commitment like “forever” and “eternal” as he slid first one, then two and finally three digits in and out…in and out, slick and slippery. Knowing it would drive Adam crazy, he curled his fingers in exactly the right place and touched softly.

“There, oh god right there,” he gasped as Kris continued to pulse against his pleasure spot while preparing him, opening him further and further.

“Angel.”

The word was a gong in Kris’ mind, a signal to start it all at last, and with it came the first twinge of apprehension. *I don’t want to hurt him.* “Listen to me, baby,” he said, combing his fingers through Adam’s hair and gazing at him lovingly. “You tell me when to go or stop, we don’t even have to go all the way…it’s completely up to you, alright?”

“Alright,” Adam responded, wide eyed like a baby deer.

*You can do this, it won’t hurt him. He’s going to be okay.* He leaned down and kissed deeply, wanting to wash away the fear that he knew was racing in Adam’s heart, hoping against hope that his man would feel nothing but pleasure and love. After a last press of the lips, Kris slid down and positioned himself on his knees in between Adam’s open legs. *Oh god, I’m really going to do this… I’m going to…* He swallowed and closed his eyes briefly, trying to gather courage he hadn’t anticipated needing. When he opened his eyes, Adam was staring at him with a soft expression on his face.

“I know you won’t hurt me…I know that,” he said, and Kris felt the truth of the statement as sure as he knew his love for this man.

*He’s not afraid of me…it’s okay.* He made his features relax and they both smiled.

And then it all began.

Kris probably overdid it with the lube, but he didn’t care. He poured heaps of it all over himself and Adam to make absolutely sure that there would be no pain. When he was satisfied he’d done the best he could, he lined up, took himself in hand and touched the tip of his length to Adam’s hole. *So incredible.*
A moan of longing caught and choked in his throat when he saw Adam’s eyes go wild and his chest start to heave. *Okay, stay calm. He just needs to focus.* “Adam, look at me,” said Kris. He reached up to touch that beautiful, worried face. “Look at my eyes and don’t stop. I want you to stare right into them.”

“Eyes, yes.” Adam looked as if he was fighting with himself, peering intensely at Kris for a long time until he finally took a deep breath and nodded.

*We can do this.* “Do that again, baby, take another breath just like that, don’t stop looking at me,” said Kris gently. “Try to relax your muscles as much as you can.”

Adam breathed.

Kris pushed.

He felt Adam clench the tip of the head. “Stop.”

Their eyes were surely connected by an invisible wire, because neither man blinked or moved them a millimeter. “Go,” said Adam. A feeling of great peace seemed to come over Kris in that moment and suddenly he was totally confident that Adam wouldn’t let himself be hurt. It was a different kind of trust and it made him feel strong for some reason. “I love you,” he said, grinning widely. “Deep breath.”

Adam inhaled and as he let it out, his body seemed to accept Kris more readily. “Keep going.”

Inch by inch, Kris moved his hips forward until the head of his length was almost all the way in. *It shouldn’t hurt. I prepared him as much as possible, but…please let him be okay.* “This will be the widest stretch, you might feel just a tiny little burn. Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

One little push and Kris had to suppress a shudder of pleasure and a fierce desire to plunge into that glorious body. *Keep it together.* He looked down and saw precisely what he’d dreaded…fear.

“Angel!” he gasped.

*No…no no no! He’s hurting, suffering. Pay attention! Help him, don’t panic…it’s just like the other flashbacks, treat it the same.* Kris reached up and cupped Adam’s cheeks. “You’re not looking at me, baby, focus, feel my hands on your skin,” he said as calmly as possible.

“Angel, angel…” Adam repeated the name several times, but Kris could tell that eye contact alone wasn’t enough. He quickly dipped his hand into the melted ice water on the table and brought it to Adam’s skin.

*Oh thank god…thank god. He’s back. Are we pushing our luck here?* “Do you want to stop now? It’s totally fine if you do.” Kris wasn’t even thinking about the fact that he was inside his lover, all he cared about was making sure Adam was okay. For a second it seemed like Adam would agree, but then…

“Oh my god…you’re inside me…you’re…”
Woah! I am! It hit him like a mallet and as he saw the look of joy spread on Adam’s face, Kris’ life changed. The enormity of this moment was almost too much to absorb, and when Adam grabbed his hips and tugged, a burst of love such as he’d never experienced flooded his being. “God, I love you so much,” he beamed at the man who’d stolen his heart forever.

Further and further in he slid, and the combination of intense physical pleasure and overwhelming happiness coursing throughout Kris’ body brought tears to his eyes. With every inch that disappeared into his lover, Kris fell into that much more bliss until finally he was all the way in and their lips touched. Nothing could have prepared him for this feeling, no dream, not even the times he’d been inside other men, because this was love and sensuality and dedication and trust all wrapped up together and it was breathtakingly beautiful.

Adam wrapped his legs around Kris as they kissed like they were starving. When the couple ran out of air, they just stared at each other with wet eyes and silly grins on their faces, but after a while they both felt the urge to move.

Kris pulled out ever so slightly and slid back in. Oh god…so good.

“Whoa,” said Adam. “Do that again, angel.”

“I know, right? Feels pretty damn good, doesn’t it?” Kris chuckled, because he knew that it did and he was thrilled that he’d made Adam feel it too.

Adam nodded and told him in no uncertain terms to move again. He laughed, loving the lighthearted feel that was entering the exchange and pulled out almost all the way before entering Adam again.

“Oh my god,” Adam breathed, a look of pure ecstasy radiating in his eyes. “Again… more.”

Kris was lost, lost and happy in the magical feeling of bonding with his lover while such intense sensations were exploding up and down his length as he slowly moved in and out. He wanted to drown in it, and when Adam started to pull him in with his hands and legs, Kris had trouble keeping the easy pace he set, because god damn it just felt so spectacular.

After several minutes of this superb torture, Adam let go of Kris thighs and began to stroke himself.

“Angel, a little faster.”

Kris groaned as he sped up, squeezing his eyes shut and panting softly. “Adam…this is…” More… oh god I want more. Muscles quaking, he fought to keep from pounding Adam into the bed like his body was crying out to do.

Things were heating up. Adam pumped himself rapidly, gasping with every one of Kris’ thrusts.

“Faster.”

Kris let go and drove in with relief, his balls slapping Adam’s skin…faster…harder… He knew he was close. He could feel it thrumming like a drum roll building in volume and speed, the clash of the giant cymbals just seconds away. But all at once Adam’s body seized around Kris, his nails and muscles and teeth digging into flesh and skin. “Angel!” he cried, arching off the bed as his eyes rolled back and he shuddered, such an exquisite vision.

His lover falling apart underneath him like that had to be the sexiest, most beautiful sight Kris had ever laid eyes on and it sent him rocketing over the edge in an instant. “Adam! Yes!” he shouted as he filled his man with seed, shaking and gasping before finally collapsing.
Wow…my cum is inside him right now.

Cum and sweat smeared their stomachs but Kris didn’t care. He was so in love, so connected and so proud of himself that he felt like running around the streets with a megaphone to announce it. They lay entwined for a long time until their breathing returned to normal.

Kris propped up on one elbow and looked down at Adam. What could they say to each other after that? What words were sufficient to describe the profound bond that they felt? Adam had trusted, had overcome a long held fear and had given himself entirely to his lover who in turn took that gift, worshiped it for the treasure it was and then gave back one of his own.

A tear splashed onto Adam’s cheek from above, mixing with the wetness that was already there. “I know,” he said softly as he reached up to caress Kris’ cheek. “I know.”

Chapter 51

Kris did not want to go to work. Foremost among the reasons for his lack of enthusiasm was that he’d just spent the better part of an hour making slow, sweet love to Adam and wanted nothing more than to revel in post coital bliss for the rest of this fine Thursday. It had been only the third time since Sunday because Adam was still getting used to bottoming, plus they both knew that it would only be an occasional occurrence anyway and not the norm.

“I think you’re forgetting something,” said Adam slyly about thirty seconds after Kris had collapsed onto him.

“Didn’t forget.” Kris pressed a brief kiss to Adam’ sweaty temple and shimmied down to settle in between his legs. “Mmm, yess,” he purred, licking his lips as he pushed back his lover’s knees. There it was…pearly white, shimmering and dribbling. Kris still couldn’t get over how profound it felt to have his seed inside Adam’s body. A part of me…in him. He ducked his head and began to gently lap at the swollen hole, bright pink and slightly tender. His tongue was a balm coated with saliva salve, perfect for soothing and exciting as he licked and licked.

A series of hoarse moans escaped Adam’s lips and didn’t cease until Kris was finished cleaning up the rest of his freckled skin, starting with the tip of his dick and careful not to miss even a single drop on his pinky. The deep, intimate kiss following the bath was making it even harder for Kris to get out of bed, especially when Adam started trailing his fingertips over the passion scratches he’d made on Kris’ back. “Gotta get up… gotta… Adam,” he groaned.

When the glaring red numbers told him he’d be late if he didn’t get a move on, he sighed in resignation, wriggled out of his boyfriend’s greedy arms and headed to the utility room. Besides having to leave the bliss of his warm, man-filled bed, Kris was also dreading work because he really wanted to be singing instead of selling ties. He let Fifi outside and then hopped in the shower, knowing that Adam would let her back in soon and feed her.

The hot water felt wonderful on his sore muscles that weren’t used to such extended periods of thrusting, and the stinging when it hit his marked up back only made him smile dreamily at the memory of dark nails raking long and slow down his skin. God…and the way he clenched me at the
end. His dick twitched and his heart throbbed because being inside Adam was more than just sexy; it was extremely intimate. As Kris began to lather his hair, he reflected on the fact that things seemed to be a little different now. In the last week, the couple had made love as many times as they’d had quick or rough sex. It was like they were rediscovering each other, taking the time to pay close attention to minute details and gauging reactions to a variety of touches.

Kris liked it. He felt to so connected to Adam now and there was a sense of growing maturity to their relationship. And I don’t think he’s scared of losing me anymore. As wonderful as that was, it came with a side effect of mood swings. Adam’s increased security meant that he was allowing himself to be even more vulnerable, which in turn led to bouts of crying and shouting. Fortunately none of it was directed at Kris. Stupid bastards, making him hurt so bad. At least he’s processing it… healing, and thank goodness for Fifi. The little pup was such a comfort whenever Adam was down, especially if Kris was at work.

After Kris had dressed and applied a few dabs of concealer to his neck, the couple sat down at the table for a simple breakfast of cereal (not Fruit Loops) and some delicious homemade banana nut muffins. “These are really amazing. No, Fifi, you can’t have any,” he said to the puppy, who was gazing up at him hopefully. He was sure she’d love a taste, but Adam was very strict about his policy that she shouldn’t be allowed people food unless it was specially prepared for her.

“Thanks,” said Adam, nodding in approval when Fifi gave up her begging, “it’s a pretty easy recipe.”

He does so much around here…cook, clean, shop for groceries… It was quite an odd feeling for Kris, because was used to being the one to take care of domestic tasks when living with a boyfriend. Even though he wasn’t very good at them and had often ordered takeout, he’d done his best to please. “Maybe you could teach me how to make them sometime,” he casually suggested, eager to find a way to be more useful.

“What? You want to make muffins?” Adam looked at him skeptically and even chuckled a little. “Now why do I have a hard time believing that?”

A hint of pink colored Kris’ cheeks as he swallowed a bite of Kashi GoLean Crunch cereal, which was surprisingly good and didn’t taste a bit like cardboard as he’d feared it would. “Well, I just want to help out is all…or I could clean sometimes. I mean you do way more then I do, and…” he trailed off with a shrug and went back to his cereal.

“Help? But…but I’m used to doing everything,” said Adam earnestly. “I don’t mind it, honestly and it makes me feel good. I like doing things for you.”

Kris didn’t doubt that for a second, but he also suspected that being in control was part of it, too. He smiled warmly and reached across the table to grasp his lover’s hand. “And I really appreciate it. It’s just weird for me. I used to do all that stuff when I lived with Ethan.” Adam bit back a laugh, his lips twitching in an expression of barely concealed disbelief. “I know, I know,” chuckled Kris, “but I’m actually not too bad at cleaning some things, and I make awesome grilled cheese sandwiches.”

“You are too cute, angel.” Adam’s eyes were glinting with glee and a bit of mischief as he leaned in and said, “Alright, how about you take over picking up Fifi’s area out back?”

“Me and my big mouth.”
“Stupid shirt,” Kris mumbled under his breath, “fold right already.” His department had recently received an order of men’s extra long button downs that were proving to be a royal pain in the ass to keep neat on the shelves. He reopened the damn thing and slid the hard plastic folding square a little lower this time before trying again. “Ha! Kris Allen is smarter than a shirt,” he said triumphantly when at last he got it right, only to blush when he looked up and saw a young woman giggling at him. *Great, I’ve been reduced to talking to clothes.* Sighing heavily, he pushed aside the garment and attempted to shrug off his grumpiness at having to be here when he could be at home playing his guitar. School was also becoming more of a nuisance, and although two weeks off would be heavenly, Kris couldn’t wait to graduate this May and get on with his life. The good news was that his professor had loved the reworked demo and told him during the last class before Spring break that he would send it to Aware Records. He’d also advised Kris to start playing local venues to get some exposure. *Maybe I should be looking at coffee houses. I’d do it for free at this point.*

The morning went by slowly and with each hour that passed, Kris’ customers were seeing less and less of his usual friendly smiles. By the time lunch rolled around, he was almost desperate to leave for the food court and thanked god that the weekend would be upon him soon. The cure for his sour attitude came halfway through his break: a text message from Adam. ‘got the job!!!!!’

A huge smile broke out on Kris’ face and he decided to call rather than sending a reply. “Hey! Congratulations, baby!” he exclaimed when Adam picked up.

“Oh my god, I’m so excited! And nervous, but…yeah!”

Kris could hear the anxiety skittering around in his boyfriend’s voice. *He’s going to do great.*

“That’s awesome! When do you start?”

“Monday,” he replied breathlessly, “shit, what am I going to wear? I have to go shopping!”

“At least you can wear the clothes you bought for me,” chortled Kris, amused but not surprised that the need for new clothes had been Adam’s first thought.

“Haha. Just for that I’m taking you with me. Oh damn, this is gonna change everything. I have to reschedule my therapy appointment and what about my workouts? And Brian, too.”

“Brain? Did he finally call you back?”

“Yep,” said Adam, still sounding chipper but more thoughtful now. “I set up a time to meet with him on Tuesday afternoon, but I’ll have to change it.”

They continued to chat until Kris said he had to get back to work. Before exchanging I love you’s however, he made sure to tell Adam that he was proud of him and to expect some extra special loving tonight after their movie date.

About thirty minutes into his afternoon shift, Kris found himself sketching his lover’s eyes on a torn off piece of receipt paper.
Alice in Wonderland was a trip, but the best part was being social with Adam and doing normal couple things like holding hands and sharing a bucket of overpriced popcorn. After the flick, they both agreed that Johnny Depp was still hot even with orange hair and that Adam should dress up as the Mad Hatter for Halloween this year. Kris could just imagine the library escapades. “Bet I’ll end up with white makeup all over my—” He stopped short, catching sight of his buddy Jason waving at him from across the theater lobby.

Adam frowned as Jason approached them and surreptitiously thumbed his angel bracelet, but managed a brief handshake and something close to a smile when Kris introduced him. That wasn’t so bad. He really is getting much better at this.

“Thanks again for all your help moving,” said Kris to his friend, “we should hang out sometime next weekend.” Jason liked the idea, said he’d be in touch soon and rejoined a large group of guys who were waiting for him.

Kris took in the less than pleased expression still lingering on Adam’s face and leaned over to whisper something into his ear, something that caused a wicked Cheshire cat grin to slowly tiptoe across his lips until it was firmly in place. “Oh really? Anything I want, huh?” Adam leered, looking exactly like the sexy wolf that knew how to drive Kris crazy. “Well then I suggest we get our asses home in a hurry.”

Thick clouds rolled in and hovered ominously over the unsuspecting city whose weatherman had cheerfully forecasted sunny skies for the next three days. Invisible hands began to ring out the dark gray billows just as Adam parked the car, and in seconds the world on the other side of the windshield became a watery blur. Adam and Kris looked at each other, grinned and made a mad dash to their front door, laughing as they sprinted until they were safely sheltered beneath the overhanging roof.

“Holy shit! I’m drenched!” Kris curled his toes and felt rainwater pool in his chucks. Adam shook his head, making Kris scream like a little girl and throw his hands up to shield his face.

“You’re already wet, you big baby!” snorted Adam.

Giggling and punching each other’s shoulders, they hauled their soaked selves inside and stood on the small tile landing. “Now what?” said Kris as he stared at the puddles forming around their feet.

Adam pushed his sopping hair from his face and waggled his eyebrows. “Hmmm, I say we strip here,” he suggested with a naughty boy grin that spoke volumes to the parts of Kris that were already appreciating the wet-Adam look.

A bead of rainwater quivering near Kris’ favorite glossed up freckle made his fingers dart out and latch onto Adam’s belt buckle. “I am totally in favor of that.” Towels are so overrated.

Once they had licked each other ‘dry,’ Kris stayed huddled and warm under the bedcovers while Adam threw on a pair of clean pants so he could let Fifi outside. He used a leash so that she could go in front under the awning without getting wet. Afterwards they allowed her up on the bed for a while to play and snuggle before putting her back in her room. It was nice just to cuddle up and kiss, to enjoy the all-the-time-in-the-world feeling that comes with cohabitation, but soon their bodies remembered the promise of extra special loving and their hands and mouths became more insistent.
Adam’s whispered request brought a smile of ‘yes please’ to Kris’ lips and he quickly reached over for the newly purchased bottle of lube. “Are you sure about this? I’m mean after this morning… aren’t you sore?”

“A little, but you said anything I wanted, and this is what I want,” said Adam as he straddled Kris and began nibbling and sucking at his neck rather relentlessly.

“So not complaining,” Kris responded with a groan, knowing full well that he was about to get the ride of his life.

What followed was pretty much Kris’ idea of the perfect porn show laced with love. The vision of Adam sitting astride him and rocking on his length with eyes closed and head thrown back did things to Kris. His eyes feasted on the lusciousness before him. Adam gripped his own ankles which made his spine arch gracefully, curving a little more with every swivel of hips and catch of breath. The budding visual artist in Kris was already sketching that whole body expression of bliss in his mind while trying to cope with the intense sensations of Adam’s tight muscles caressing him repeatedly.

“I feel…so good,” Adam suddenly moaned, “I can make it touch me in just the right place…I can… squeeze…” Such abandon. Such loose, melty…everything.

“Oh god…baby, you’re so beautiful,” breathed Kris through panting lungs. While his fingers were itching to feel smooth skin gliding beneath them, he couldn’t quite let go of this opportunity to watch his lover pleasure himself. Erotic sounds of broken words and guttural groans tumbled from Adam’s lips as he rocked, lifted up and down, and experimented with angles until Kris was out of his mind with want.

Finally Adam let go of his ankles and leaned forward, placing his palms on Kris’ chest. He opened his eyes and they were all pupil, dark orbs full of sensuality that shattered Kris’ ability to hold back a second longer.

Need…need... “Baby,” he croaked.

Adam’s eyes focused and sharpened into devilry. “Mine.”

Chipped black nails made half moons around Kris’ nipples, the mood shifted and Kris surrendered to the dominant man who began to clench around him with short, rapid thrusts. “Oh fu-- Adam!” He dug into the flying hips, speechless with pleasure and held on for dear life as his boyfriend rendered him incoherent… thrusting faster and faster until that cherished released made Kris spasm and buck uncontrollably. A sharp cry. A last seizing of muscles. A whimper.

When the stars finally cleared from his eyes, he gazed up and shuddered at the sight of Adam licking his lips. “Give me your hand, angel,” he murmured, and proceeded to pump his dick with their fingers entwined around it. In under a minute Adam was chanting his sex song in time to the spurring of hot cum which dribbled down their wrists. Kris wondered if it was possible for eyes to have an orgasm.

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It was still pouring when they woke up the next day and since Adam was determined to buy clothes for his new job, they decided to drive to the mall. It was the last place Kris wanted to go on a day off, but as long as they stayed away from Macy’s he thought he could probably lose himself in the amusement of watching Adam get all giddy over a pair of pants or a crazy necklace.

“Can we not eat at the food court though? I have enough of that during the week,” said Kris as they dressed.

“Sure thing,” Adam replied, pulling the rainbow lips t-shirt over his head. He regarded his reflection in the dresser mirror and grinned. “I love this shirt.”

Kris smiled at him. *It's so cool getting ready like this, putting on clothes from the same closet.*

Today marked the second week of living together, and while they couldn’t seem to get enough joy from this fact, the couple’s differences had continued to clash. Already they’d had to negotiate a few more disagreements, and Adam’s recent mood swings made those interactions particularly delicate. It didn’t stop Kris from speaking his mind, however. Picking up after himself was no big deal, but he’d outright refused to organize his drawers the way Adam did and it was impossible to remember exactly where everything was supposed to go in the kitchen. Kris was proud that he’d managed not to give in, even if it meant enduring some huffy silence from Adam.

The mall was ridiculously crowded because of the rain, but neither of them really cared because they were having too much fun acting like teenagers.

“Oooh! Diesel is having a sale!” Adam squealed, pointing as he grabbed Kris’ hand and practically skipped into the store.

“No, no, no,” Kris laughed, “those sunglasses are too big for your face…try these.”

“But big glasses are in! I’m getting them. Oh look at those pants! Hey, wanna help me try them on?” Adam said with a wink.

They nearly got kicked out of the store for creating a ruckus, even though they were only giggling and smooching. “Gentlemen, I’ll have to ask you to keep it down or you’ll have to leave,” said a firm voice on the other side of the fitting room door. The two men froze mid kiss and tried to stifle their snorts of laughter. “Come on,” Adam chuckled, “help me get into these.” He had to tug and jump up and down a bit because the skinny jeans were really tight.

“Put your arms up and suck in…I’ll zip you up,” Kris suggested with a snort. *Yeah, I could get used to shopping. Definitely.*

“We should go to Taste for lunch,” said Adam as lunchtime approached, “I love that place and it’s not too expensive.

“Sounds good, they have awesome grilled cheese there.”

Adam looked at him incredulously. “You want to get grilled cheese at a restaurant like that?”

“Well it’s got fancy cheese on it,” he returned cheekily.
Kris thoroughly enjoyed his lunch despite being mocked for his menu choices, and by the time they were ready to head back to the mall, the rain was starting to let up. “Oh thank god! I think my fingertips are pruning,” said Adam dramatically as they got in his car.

The drive to the shopping center was short but wet. Enormous puddles flooded the road and most of the vehicles were moving slowly to avoid hydroplaning. On the way, Adam and Kris chatted about how Fifi’s obedience training was going. *Last week’s class went really well. I can’t believe how relaxed he seemed. Hope tomorrow is good, too.*

“I got her to shake my hand the other day,” said Adam, sounding like a proud parent.

Neither of them saw the gray car careening out of control through a red light until it was too late.

Crash.

**Chapter 52**

It was one of those slow motion moments that everyone talks about but no one can really understand until it happens to them. In reality the gray sedan flew through the intersection even though it seemed to move on tortoise legs, heading right for the passenger side where Kris’ face went from laughing to terrified in the span of two eternally drawn out seconds. They both tried to brace themselves in the instant before the collision.

*WHAM!*  

Adam’s car skidded with the impact as glass shattered and metal bent with a sickening crunch. Two piercing screams rent the air, one in pain and the other in fear.

“**KRIS! KRIS! NOOO! N--**”

Suddenly everything went black.

When Adam opened his eyes, he immediately shut them again as if that would banish the throbbing headache pounding his skull. *Wait. KRIS! To hell with pain! His eyes snapped open just in time to see his angel’s legs and feet being pulled through the mangled window frame of the passenger door. Panic gripped his heart and tried to strangle it to death. “Kris! KRIS!”* Adam instinctually lunged at the disappearing shoes, but his seat belt choked him. “NO! Fucking…FUCK!” The buckle wouldn’t unfasten no matter how hard his manic fingers scrabbled and pressed at it. The suffocating terror blasting his brain was too loud to silence the voice in the back of his mind that said Kris couldn’t be dead because they hadn’t been hit hard enough.

“I heard him scream. **GODDAMMIT!**”

“Are you all right?”

Adam whipped his head up, which made everything spin alarmingly and he almost vomited on the spot. “I’m fine!” he yelled, because he couldn’t not yell right now. Click. “Finally!” adam threw off
“Slowly now, son, I think you have a concussion, so stand up slowly.”

“I have to find Kris!” Adam pushed the door ajar, ignoring the officer’s instructions. The uniformed man was a source of information, nothing more. “Is he okay? Is he hurt? Where is he?”

“Whoa, careful there,” said the man as he steadied Adam’s swaying body. “You need to calm down, son, and you need to be taken to the hospital.”

“Calm down? How can you…WHERE IS KRIS?” Didn’t the officer understand how important this was?

“They’re putting him in the ambulance now. Another one will take you to—”

“NO! I have to…” Adam pushed away from him, staggering in the direction of the white and red trucks that held such horrible memories for him. His eyes slid by the insignificant gray sedan crumpled into his Honda, police cars and people everywhere as he stumbled, literally holding his head with his hands to keep himself from throwing up. He had to get to Kris. And then he saw the stretcher being loaded into the ambulance. “ANGEL!” He tried to run, but a stab of blinding pain suddenly brought him to his knees. Tears sprung to his eyes. I failed.

“Angel,” he sobbed, arms reaching out as he watched the vehicle speed away. The nausea suddenly rose up like a geyser, making him double over and retch onto the cement.

A pair of strong arms pulled him to his feet. “Kris,” Adam whimpered, shakily wiping his mouth and staring into the paramedic’s eyes imploringly.

“He’s alive, but injured.” The man seemed to realize how much Adam needed this information. “We’re taking you to the same hospital. Come on now.”

A numbness started to settle in as the adrenaline faded from Adam’s nervous system. “How bad?” he whispered. The pain in his skull turned down a notch and became more bearable.

“It looks like his leg is broken,” said the paramedic as he carefully walked Adam to the second ambulance, “but there may be other injuries. The side airbag prevented damage to his head…we’re not sure about anything else yet. I want you to stay calm. You hit your head on the window pretty hard and you have a concussion.”

My angel is hurt. He could’ve died. Adam tried not to think about that because he’d throw up again if he did. He allowed the paramedic to help him into the back of the truck and lay down on the stretcher, mentally clinging to the knowledge that Kris was alive and that he would see him soon. The image of Kris’ legs being pulled out of a broken window assaulted him for the entire drive to the hospital. He couldn’t get out by himself. Please let him be okay. Were hearts meant to handle this much pain in one lifetime?

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“I’m fine! Let me go…I need to see him!” Adam hadn’t counted on this. Questions, forms, an exam, an X-ray, it all took so much damn time and he was getting desperate. Of course he knew what day it
was and no he didn’t need a fucking X-ray! As much as he loathed hospitals and wanted to get out of this one as soon as possible, all Adam could think about was getting to Kris. The bonds that tied the couple together were strong, but he felt like someone was attacking them and only physical reunification could remedy this kind of torture. After what seemed like forever, the doctor finally told Adam he’d suffered a minor concussion and was lucky that he’d been unconscious for only a couple minutes. He was given some painkillers for his headache along with aftercare instructions. Adam barely listened and refused lie down when Kris was nearby, hurting, needing him.

“Kris Allen, he was injured in the crash, I need to see him. He must be here in the emergency room, right?” he asked quickly when they gave up trying to convince him to rest. Adam threw back the curtains surrounding the treatment area and would’ve run out to search for his lover if the nurse hadn’t stopped him.

“Let me find him for you. I’ll need to check to make sure it’s all right first, okay?” she said, not unkindly. “And you’ll probably want to get dressed,” she said with a wink.

Adam considered just pushing past her anyway despite the fact that he was still wearing a hospital gown, but he’d probably get kicked out for that, so he nodded sharply and she pulled the curtains closed before leaving. He threw on his clothes and sat on the edge of the bed, pressing the tiny red angel to his heart while he waited and tried to stem the flow of tears that were suddenly threatening to erupt. It’s too much. Too much. Self induced pressure, to be social, to be healed and normal, puppy classes, a day job, Brian, the little disagreements at home and the loss of control, all the new levels of vulnerability…and now this. Too much. He dropped his head and began to weep silently. Large drops clung to his long lashes as if they could fight off sadness by refusing to fall, but to no avail. Baby. Wimp. Look at you, sniveling, weak and you’re not even hurt. “Shut up,” he told himself through choked out sobs. Lambert, you pathetic fool! Kris needs you to be strong now. Quit your blubbering!

“I c-can’t do this…I’m not s-strong enough.” Yes you are. Adam gasped quietly and stopped crying. He wasn’t sure if that had been the mocking voice or the encouraging one. It doesn’t matter. It’s my voice. I’m strong enough. Look what I’ve been through already. Sniffing and wiping at his eyes, he stood up and took a deep breath. “Yes,” he whispered out loud as he moved over to look at his face in a small mirror near the sink. An emo clown streaked with grime and airbag dust stared back at him. Jesus. What a fucking mess. Some water and a paper towel made a slight improvement.

“Mr. Lambert? I found your friend and you can see him.”

“He’s my partner,” Adam declared, feeling the truth of that word bolster his aching heart a bit. “Where is he?”

As they walked through the emergency department, Adam shoved down his own needs so he could take care of Kris. Exhaustion, hunger, and the dull pain in his head - he put the lid on tight for the time being. The nurse rounded a corner and stopped. “He’s going to be just fine,” she said, gesturing for him to enter the small room.

Kris looked small and frail in the hospital gown. An odd sort of cast encased his lower leg and foot, and his face was ashen. He glanced up when he heard the nurse’s voice. “Adam!”

He’s okay, he’s all right. Trying not to run, Adam hurried over to the bed where Kris had his arms outstretched, an expression of relief clear on his features that was quickly followed by tears. “You wouldn’t wake up…I tried, but y-you w-wouldn’t…”
If he hadn’t been worried that he might hurt him, Adam would have leapt onto the bed and crushed Kris to his body. He settled for diving into a half embrace and began kissing his lover everywhere he could reach. “Baby…you’re okay…I was so scared,” he murmured as his lips fell like rain onto Kris’ forehead, cheeks and mouth.

“Please be careful,” said the doctor sternly, “he has a bruised rib.”

Adam drew back at once. “Kris! I’m so sorry, am I hurting you?”

“No, I don’t care…d-don’t…” He reached out again, buried his face into Adam’s chest and started to weep. “C-couldn’t wake you…they took m-me away…it all happened s-so fast,” he cried.

Adam hadn’t thought about how frightening that must have been for Kris. “Shhh, it’s all right, angel. It’s okay…I’m here now and I’m perfectly fine,” he said soothingly as he kissed the top of Kris’ head and held him tight. See, I can do this…I can be strong for him.

The doctor cleared his throat and Adam looked up at him while continuing to comfort Kris. “How bad are his injuries?” he asked the physician, who was frowning at the loving reunification taking place.

“His parents have already been notified and are aware of his condition,” the doctor said in a sharp tone.

Adam sighed and tried not to get angry at the man’s obvious disapproval of homosexuality. He knew the signs. “That’s good, but his parents are in Arkansas and I’m the one who’ll be taking care of him, so I need to know.”

“Janice, please handle this,” he directed the nurse and left.

What a dick! Real professional, asshole. Adam shifted on the bed, leaned back against the wall so he could hold Kris more comfortably and pressed another kiss to his lover’s hair. He was quieter now but still clung to Adam, sniffling every once in a while.

“Um, sorry about that,” said Janice after her boss was gone. She seemed to struggle with herself for a moment and then smiled. “Kris has a closed, incomplete fracture, which means that his leg is broken but the bones are still partially connected. That’s a really good thing because it’ll heal a lot faster and his bones don’t need to be set. He also has a bruised rib which should heal just fine on its own.”

The hands throttling Adam’s heart loosened a bit at this news and also helped him cope with a rising sense of guilt. If I hadn’t insisted on going shopping… It would’ve been easy to let himself get distracted by that, but he needed to pay attention now. Plenty of time to beat yourself up about that later, Lambert.

“We’ve explained to Kris how the aircast works and that he’ll need crutches for a while. He shouldn’t put any weight on it for now until his doctor says it’s okay. Ice and elevation will help reduce the swelling and he can take Tylenol for the pain.”

Adam peered down at the boot-like cast that looked like it was made of hard plastic. “Is it removable?”

“Yes. He can take it off to shower or to let it breathe occasionally, but Kris…” She paused until Kris turned his head to meet her eyes. “You need to wear this pretty much all the time. Don’t push
Kris nodded and snuggled back into the embrace like he was scared Adam would disappear if they were separated again. *I know the feeling.* As Janice went through the aftercare instructions, Adam became more aware of his headache and extreme weariness. There was still the matter of his damaged car to take care of, insurance, and he’d seen a police officer hovering around nearby. He told himself to be a man and deal.

After giving his report to the officer while Kris practiced walking on the crutches, they got their discharge papers and were released. Adam’s mother came to pick them up at the hospital, bringing with her a pair of Neil’s old shorts for Kris, and said she’d help with the insurance calls and anything else they needed. She hugged them both fiercely when she arrived and had to take a few moments to compose herself before driving them home. It was the first time Leila had been to their new apartment and as Adam got his boyfriend situated, she did her best to find things in the kitchen to make dinner.

“Easy does it…there we go.” Adam lifted Kris’ leg and gently lowered it onto a stack of pillows. “Do you need some more Tylenol?” he asked. He lay down on the bed next to Kris and caressed his cheek. “Are you hungry? Sleepy?”

“Just tired,” Kris replied softly. “You sure you’re okay though? You hit your head and blacked out.” There was a tinge of worry and the remnants of fear still lingering in those large brown eyes.

Poor thing. He was probably as scared as I was. “I have a bit of a headache, but other than that I’m all right. They examined me and took an X-ray. I’m fine, baby,” he assured him. “Why don’t you take a nap while I help my mom in the kitchen.”

“Stay here with me until I fall asleep?”

“Of course I will.”

Adam didn’t get up right away after peace had settled over Kris’ body. He just watched him sleep, taking in the bruises on his right arm and the way his breathing was a little shallower than usual. *What if I’d lost him?* While Adam wasn’t scared that Kris would leave him anymore, he’d never even considered the possibility that death could force that to happen. The thought made him want to lock the door and stay here forever with his lover in safety. *It would break me.* His felt sick again and suddenly rolled off the bed and went into the kitchen.

“Mom.” His voice cracked as he said it.

Leila looked up from the pot she was tending and immediately opened her arms. She must have seen the utter exhaustion and vulnerability swirling like a lost, whimpering aura around her son.

Adam tumbled into her embrace, suddenly desperate for her comfort. The world was crazy and unpredictable, but she was a constant, a source of strength and tenderness radiating the unconditional love that had sustained Adam through his darkest hours.

Without a word, she turned off the stove and led Adam to the couch where he snuggled up to her like he’d done when he was five. It didn’t matter that his tall form barely fit in her arms. He laid his head on her shoulder, allowing the warmth of her hand on his back to soak into his being. There were no tears, just the silent and steady love of a mother sheltering her son from the chaos of life for a moment. Adam breathed it in and felt like giant hands were scooping up all the bits of himself that
kept running in circles, holding them all together as his mother whispered, “ssshhh… there, there now, everything’s going to be okay.”

A sense of serenity bathed his brain and without knowing why, he peered up at her and said, “Momma, I let Kris make love to me, and I was okay.”

There is nothing in the world quite like a mother’s pride. It is a perfectly crafted key that fits into a child’s lockbox of motivation to strive for excellence. Adam felt the box open as he gazed into his mother’s eyes and knew that he would keep struggling to grow.

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“Adam, this is getting ridiculous! You don’t have to carry me to the shower every time,” Kris laughed.

It was Monday morning, three days after the accident and Adam was taking his nursing duties very seriously - maybe too seriously, although he’d never admit it. “I don’t mind, plus it’s just easier this way,” he said as he walked into the bathroom with his naked boyfriend in his arms.

“But I have to get used to the crutches. How am I going to do that when you keep hauling me off my feet?”

Adam smiled and set Kris down on the shower chair he’d purchased yesterday. “Those things are so uncomfortable though and they make your armpits sore.” After pressing a kiss to Kris’ stubbly cheek, he turned on the tap and began adjusting the temperature so it would be perfect. Adam was relieved that Sew Your Soul had suggested he start a week later due to the accident, and since Kris was also out of work and it was Spring Break, the couple had lots of time together. Adam had also rescheduled his meeting with Brian because he was starting to feel like he might be pushing it. I need to talk to Sheila about that today. Maybe I really am doing too much. He tested the water, removed the showerhead from it’s bracket on the wall and handed it to Kris, who rolled his eyes and snorted.

“That’s true, but I have to get used to it. Who’s going to carry me when you’re at work next week, huh?” he chortled as he flipped the lever that diverted water from the tap to the showerhead, careful to avoid bumping his uncasted leg on anything.

“Well I don’t have work until ten, so I could still--”

“Adam,” Kris interrupted in a fond yet slightly exasperated tone.

Adam sighed heavily, standing with his hands on his hips and willing Kris to understand that the more he did for him, the less guilty he felt. But he doesn’t blame you, he already told you that a million times. Give it a rest. “Oh alright, but can I at least carry you back into the bedroom when you’re done today?” Guilt wasn’t the only motivation for Adam’s actions, and it was only a tiny feeling compared to the wellspring of selfless love that made him want to nurture and protect his boyfriend. And it makes me feel manly.

“Yes, you goofball, and if you really want to help, you can stop trying to make me eat tofu! That stuff is disgusting,” said Kris, scrunching up his nose. “It doesn’t matter what you do to it, it still tastes like soggy cardboard.” A spark of mischief suddenly gleamed in his eyes and he began to turn
the spray of water in Adam’s direction.

“Okay, okay, no more tofu!” Adam chuckled as he drew the curtain closed before Kris could get him wet, seeing as he was already showered and dressed. “I’ll put sardines in your omelet instead!” he called out as he left the bathroom, laughing when Kris threatened to withhold sex if he found a single fish in his breakfast.

Adam walked over to the sliding door and let Fifi in. She was full of springs today, even more so then usual, and she immediately jumped into the air as if determined to reach the ceiling. Adam caught her mid leap and tilted his head back to avoid getting licked in the eye when she started kissing his face. “Did you know that you’re the best doggie in the whole world? Did you? So smart, so pretty, yes you are!” he cooed at her as she wriggled and squirmed in his arms like a wind up toy on speed. He scratched behind her ears and then put her back down so she could attack her favorite hamburger toy. She pounced on it at once, growling and shaking the plastic victim, which clearly didn’t stand a chance against such viciousness.

Once in the kitchen, Adam washed his hands and picked up a list he’d made of foods that promote the healing of broken bones. Thank god for the internet. He scanned past tofu and sardines – yes sardines were actually on the list – and decided that spinach would do just fine. After gathering all the ingredients plus those needed for making fruit salad, he set to work. The sharp knife in his hand sliced easily through a banana, some melon and a few strawberries, but just as he was about to peel an orange the doorbell rang. Fifi stopped playing at the sound, but fortunately she wasn’t the yapping type of dog and merely cocked her head to the side with the hamburger still trapped in her tiny jaws. Adam frowned in curiosity and went to answer the door.

“Delivery for Kris Allen,” said the UPS man with a medium sized box in his hand.

“Yes, he lives here. I’ll sign for it,” Adam responded eagerly, elated by the domestic implications of a package for Kris being delivered here. We live together. Sometimes he still couldn’t believe it was true, but the proof was written right there on the box label in loopy handwriting that was vaguely familiar. He checked the return address and saw that it was from his mother. That’s odd. Why would she send him something?

But Adam was too preoccupied to really think about it, and when the man left, he sank onto the couch and stared at the combination of Kris’ name and their mutual address. Never had he imagined this was possible. I’m not alone…I’m not…

The ghost of sadness that always seemed to be lingering nearby suddenly came back to life and took on a solid presence in the form of tears. Adam hated these abrupt shifts in mood, but Sheila had said that it was important to go with the sorrow and not push it down like he’d always done in the past. It didn’t seem fair that happiness could so quickly turn into grief before he even had the chance to revel in it. Plus he always had to wrestle with the feeling that so called ‘weakness’ like this made him less of a man.

Plop…plop…plop. Three dark splatters marked the brown box. His breath hitched and he began to mourn the ten years of his life that had been spent in relative isolation and addiction. So many nights alone…so many empty fucks. Years of denial. He slumped back on the couch and allowed himself to cry freely while clutching the box and the security it represented, weeping out the vast ocean of sadness in little trickles with the hope that someday he’d be free of it completely.

Fifi hopped up next to him and he automatically swept her up, bringing her close to his heart. She was yet another source of unconditional love that Adam could rely on in these moments. If the little pup minded being shaken by his heaving chest, she didn’t show it.
Each tear that rolled down his cheek contained the ache of the utter loneliness that had been trapped inside his soul for a decade. Only now did he recognize the delusion of safety for what it was—a cage that was so well protected it had cut him off from the possibility of finding true happiness. And as much as he valued the miracle of Kris suddenly reaching in through the bars, it didn’t erase the hurt. The one thing Adam was forgetting as he released his grief was that he had also reached out. Somehow he’d been ready to.

The universe decided to be merciful and turned off the waterworks just as Adam heard the shower stop. He kissed his puppy’s smooth head, wiped his eyes and stood up. *There’s strength in vulnerability…strength in vulnerability.* He had to repeat it several times before he was ready to face the rest of the day. The bathroom was steamy and warm when he opened the door. “All set?”

“Almost,” came Kris’ muffled voice from beneath the towel he was using to scrub his hair dry. When he was done he grinned up at Adam, looking something like an adolescent lion that had just received a bath from momma lion, only much cuter. Adam scooped him up and kissed his mouth tenderly, sighing when he felt damp arms curl around his neck. He thought that Kris was even more beautiful on this side of the sorrow.

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Kris ran his thumb over the dark splotches on the box. A sad but loving smile graced his lips as he looked at Adam before drawing a pocketknife across the tape. There was no need to discuss it. He opened the box flaps and peered inside. “Clothes? Did you know about this?”

“Nope. What did she send you?”

Kris pulled out an odd looking pair of athletic pants that had snaps running down the outer side of each leg from waistband to ankle. “Weird, it’s like…huh.” He checked the tag. “Oh! Breakaway pants! That is so perfect! Now I won’t have to wear shorts all the time,” he beamed. “But, how did she know my size?”

“She’s a mom.” They both giggled at the mysterious ways of mothers.

Kris removed three more pairs of the ingenious pants, but what really made him squeal with delight was a set of gel-based pads for his crutches that would prevent friction and increase underarm comfort. “Brilliant! I love your mom, she’s…oh wait, there’s a card, too.” The envelope was so small that it wasn’t surprising he hadn’t seen it right away. The tiny card inside was light blue with embossed flowers on the edges. Since the couple was sitting so close together, Adam saw the words on the front at the same time that Kris did: Thank you for loving my son.

Adam recalled the moment he’d experienced on Friday when the universe had unexpectedly urged him to share such an intimate detail with his mother. *It was the right thing to do. She was so proud of me and…I felt proud of me, too.*

“Where is this coming from?” asked Kris. There was a suggestion of tears in his eyes.

“She’s just happy for me,” said Adam softly. “She’s always wanted me to…” He gestured at Kris and hoped it was obvious what he meant, because he really didn’t want to start crying again. He cleared his throat. “Looks like there’s something else in there.”
Kris leaned over and pecked Adam on the lips before going back to the envelope. “Oh wow! She didn’t have to do that,” he said as he removed a folded up check for two hundred dollars. There was a post-it note on it that said he should use the money to go buy himself a really cool shoe for his left foot. He chuckled at that. “How am I ever going to thank her for this?”

“By giving her grandchildren someday.” Adam gasped the instant after the words tumbled out of his mouth. “I mean…I…I…” he stammered, his hands flapping in the air like the wings of a distressed bird. Even though they had both professed their intentions to be together forever, neither Kris nor Adam had ever vocalized such a concrete idea. *Fuck! Since when did I lose my filter?* He’d never had one as a child, but years of conditioning meant that Adam rarely said things he didn’t plan on saying unless he was emotionally reacting to something. He opened his mouth and began to apologize, but Kris silenced him with a shining smile and a deep kiss.

“Well you can tell her to expect that…someday,” murmured Kris after stealing Adam’s breath away. Once his racing heart was recovered from the combination of arousal and flustered adrenaline, a brief thought blew into Adam’s mind, a mental chuckle at the irony that being in love could bring such intense pain one day and overwhelming joy the next. As happy as he felt at the moment, sometimes Adam was exhausted by all the twists and turns of emotion that had never been a problem when he was in denial. *When is this rollercoaster going to even out? I’m tired.*

Breakfast turned into brunch by the time the omelets were finally done and on the table. Kris jokingly checked for sardines before taking a bite and then washed down some extra strength painkillers with a gulp of orange juice. “So what time is your therapy appointment?”

Adam also had a pill to take, and he was grateful for it today for some reason. “Two, but I’ll have to take your car since mine is still in the shop.”

“No problem,” said Kris.

Adam noticed that his boyfriend was frowning slightly. “You all right?” he asked as he stabbed a piece of fruit.

“Yeah, it’s just…well I kind of miss Matt. Actually I really miss him and he was so worried about me after the accident. He wants to see me and I’d like to hang out with him tonight since we don’t have school.”

“Sounds great,” said Adam, “where do you want to go?”

Kris was still frowning and he looked uncertain now, as if debating whether or not to say something.

“Angel, what is it?” Adam had become used to Kris speaking his mind and this kind of hesitancy made him nervous.

One deep breath later, Kris squared his jaw and said, “I want to invite him to come over here. Ali can come, but…but it’s my apartment too, and…well, if it’s okay, I mean I don’t need permission, it’s just…ugh.” His tone wasn’t demanding, rather he sounded like he was trying to be considerate and assertive at the same time.

*Shit.* This was exactly the sort of thing Adam didn’t need right now. His plate was already so full that he was scared of adding something else to it. But he also knew that Kris was trying to exercise his
non-doormat ways and he had a point, it was his apartment, too and getting around on crutches wasn’t easy. It made more sense for Matt to come here. “Kris, you know how much I like Matt but to be honest, I’m feeling a bit…I don’t know, unsteady I guess is the right word. I don’t have any right to tell you no because this is your place too, so…so…umm, maybe I’ll just go out tonight on my own or with Ali while you guys hang out.” That should be a fair enough compromise. Adam was uncomfortable with Matt being in the apartment at all, but he obviously had to get over that. He twisted his napkin in time to the somersaults flipping in his stomach.

“I don’t want to drive you out of the apartment though,” said Kris with furrowed brows. It was clear that he was struggling with himself as well. “You know what, never mind,” he sighed suddenly, “I don’t even know why I brought it up.”

“Because you miss your best friend. It’s fine, Kris. Me and Ali will go out and you just call me when Matt leaves.”

“Really?”

“Yeah,” said Adam with his best attempt at a reassuring smile. Is it time for therapy yet?

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Sheila’s waiting room was comfortable enough, but not even its warmly painted walls of blue could soothe Adam’s full body itch to start the session already. I can handle it all. I can. The minutes crept by and he began to bounce his leg up and down impatiently, grateful that no one else was there to witness his anxiety. When his therapist finally came out, Adam leapt up from the chair and followed her back to her office. The first thing he did after Sheila closed the door was to grab a stress ball. He chose a green one and wondered how hard he could squeeze it before it broke.

Sheila sat down opposite him and smiled. “You look incredibly wound up, Adam,” she began.

“You could say that.” Without waiting for a response he let loose on her, spilling out the details of the accident, his mood swings, his worries about Brian, his new job, Matt coming over and all the things he was trying to accomplish socially. He talked for ten minutes straight before finally pausing. There were deep imprints in the stress ball by the time he was done, but he had to admit that the mere act of venting had relieved some of the tightness in his muscles. He took a deep breath and felt a little calmer.

“That’s quite a lot to be dealing with,” said Sheila. “First I’d like to say that I’m extremely glad you and Kris are relatively okay after the car crash. And secondly, I think this is a great time for us to do a treatment plan review.”

“What? But what about all the stuff I just told you?” Isn’t it her job to help me sort those things out?

“I’m not ignoring any of it and we will talk about it, but let’s do the review first.”

He was disappointed, but Sheila had never led him astray in all the years that he’d know her. “Okay.”

She nodded and then went to her filing cabinet to retrieve his treatment plan. When she sat back
down, she put on a pair of red-rimmed glasses and crossed her legs. “Your first goal is to get back to the ocean. How have you been doing with the CD?”

“I’m up to almost an hour now without any flashbacks,” he said, unable to hide the sudden infusion of pride that was flooding his being. “It’s starting to feel peaceful like it used to when I was a kid.”

“That is spectacular!” Sheila said brightly. “You are really on a roll. I’m so proud of you, Adam.”

“Thank you!” He beamed at her and easily accepted the compliment without remembering that he was supposed to struggle with that. “When do you think I’ll be ready for the real thing?”

“How. Well the next step would be to walk near the ocean without seeing it, just so you can smell it and hear it, but I don’t want you to do that this week or next because you obviously have a lot going on.” She said it in such a way that Adam didn’t feel she was implying he couldn’t handle it. It was more like his schedule was busy and he wouldn’t be able to fit it in. “And while we’re on the subject, how long has it been since you’ve had a full-on flashback?”

Adam had to think about that for a minute. He chewed on his lower lip and tried to remember. Wow, it was just before I moved! “Umm, a little over three weeks,” he stated.

Sheila sat back in her chair and looked at him with a wide grin, her green eyes crinkling into crow’s feet at the corners. “I don’t think you need me to tell you how incredible that is, especially given all of the things you mentioned when you first walked in here.”

Huh. How the fuck did I not see that? He returned the smile and blushed a little under her praise. Sheila didn’t say anything for a while and just let the truth of his progress permeate the air. It felt good.

“Let’s move on,” said his therapist after a few minutes.

The stress ball went back into the basket as Adam relaxed in the armchair, ready to face his next goal.

“Learn how to accept help while not being dependent on Kris. This includes developing social skills and working on your insecurities.”

Adam told her about his ability to let Kris comfort him now with less difficulty and that he could also say when he wanted to handle things on his own.

“Excellent! And does Kris listen to you at those times?”

“Always. He’s so amazing, Sheila.”

“I’m happy you have someone like him,” she said, “and what about the suffocating neediness…do you still feel that for Kris?”

Adam said the first thing that came to mind. “Well, I don’t think he’s going to leave me anymore, but if something happened to him…” like death… “…I would be heartbroken for a very, very long time. I’m not even sure that I could—” He stopped speaking abruptly, because he’d promised his Nana that no matter how difficult things got in his life, he would live it. “I would be heartbroken, yes.”

“As anyone would be. How do you feel when you aren’t with him physically?”
“I miss him a lot, but I know that I’ll see him again soon so it’s usually all right. Except for that day we had the accident. Ugh, don’t think about that.

“You know you’ll see him again soon,” Sheila repeated. “Why aren’t you afraid that he’ll leave you?” She leaned forward and peered at him intently as if she’d been waiting for his answer to that specific question for years.

“I’m not sure exactly. He’s been there for me when I’ve been at my worst and he still loves me. I trust him, more than I trust myself sometimes,” he said, his mouth twisting up to the side as he thought about his lover affectionately.

“Adam, look at me.”

He tried to refocus and made eye contact.

Sheila was at the edge of her seat now. “Are you a damaged freak?”

This was the last thing he ever expected to come out of his therapist’s mouth, but it made him shudder in a weird déjà vu sort of way. His mouth fell open with the phrase, “I don’t know.” It’s a strange but magical thing when subconscious thoughts move into consciousness, like an abracadabra moment where the trick works out exactly as planned. Adam stared at Sheila and would have stared at himself if he could have. “Well fuck!” he shouted in delight.

Sheila cracked up.

After that Adam found it almost impossible to concentrate and kept giggling every once in a while. It was only after they’d finished the review and came to the subject of Brian that his smile fell. He accused Sheila of being a killjoy even though he really did want some advice on the matter. Obviously her first response was that Brian needed counseling, but she hesitated a little after that.

“What do you hope to accomplish by mentoring him?” she asked.

That was a good question. “Um…help him see that he doesn’t need to act that way. I think there’s a reason for it.”

Sheila’s brows came together in an expression of concern. “Adam, you can’t be his therapist. That’s not what mentoring is all about. You can’t go into this thinking that you can fix him.”

“I don’t want to be his therapist,” said Adam quickly, “I just don’t want him to do what I did.” I can change, then he can.

“Listen to me.” The woman sounded grave, more so than Adam had ever heard her. “There is only one way that this can work out for both of you. Being a mentor can be extremely rewarding, but you need to be very, very careful here. Are you paying attention?”

Adam sat up in his chair. “Yes.”

“Allright. First of all, his parents will need to know about this. No, I’m serious about that,” she said when he started to protest. “They don’t have to know why if he doesn’t want to tell them, but they need to know that their son is hanging out with you. This is imperative because they are still his guardians and he lives with them.” She pinned him with stern eyes until he nodded.
“Good. Second, you’ll have to go about this in a very controlled way. Meet at the same place every 
time and no more than every other week, and do not tell him about your trauma unless you and I 
have discussed it first. Your goal here is to support him and be a positive male influence. You can 
answer questions if he has them…you can talk about sexual preference and things you’ve learned 
about relationships, but if he starts sharing deep personal experiences or gets really emotional, I want 
you to stop and tell him he should be talking with a counselor. You cannot hold those things for him, 
understand?”

*Whoa.* It was like being hit over the head with a barrel of words. Sheila was clearly trying to protect 
both Adam and Brian with these instructions and he did his best to absorb it all. “Uh, can you say 
that all again?”

After leaving the office, Adam had a much clearer idea of how to mentor Brian, and it made him feel 
a hell of a lot better about doing it. He was even excited. One of the best parts of the session had 
happened right before the end in the form of another cooking analogy. Every morning when he 
woke up, Sheila said he should write down his “recipe” for the day of all the things he wanted to 
accomplish or obligations he had. His goal should be to work on that recipe until it was finished and 
not to think about the one for tomorrow or any other day. If he started getting overwhelmed by how 
full the menu of his life felt, he should go back to the list of the current day’s “ingredients” to refocus.

When Adam got into Kris’ car in the parking lot, he turned the radio all the way up and yelled, “I am 
fucking awesome!” He sang a little song on his way home about how cool he was.

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Kris nearly jumped up from the couch when the front door flew open to reveal a tall peacock all 
hyped up on pride. “I. Kick. Ass.” proclaimed Adam as he slammed the door shut and strutted over 
to his surprised lover. He swayed his hips with every step and then came to a stop like he was posing 
for a photo shoot.

“I don’t doubt it for a second,” Kris chuckled, “but I’m really glad to hear you say that.” He put 
down a pad of paper on the coffee table and Adam saw his own face on it.

He’s drawing me again. That’s so fucking cool. “What time is Matt coming over?”

“Around seven.”

“Perfect.” Adam leaned down to pick up Kris.

“Hey I thought you weren’t going to do that anymore?”

“Well, I figured you wouldn’t mind since I’m carrying you to the bedroom for sex and I don’t think I 
can wait long enough for you to hobble there.”

Kris’ arms shot up in the air. “Not complaining.”

Fifi followed them, but as soon as she saw that they were ‘wrestling’ on the bed, she went back into 
the living room and chose a new toy to intimidate.
After five minutes of passionate kissing, Adam tore off Kris’ new breakaway pants with relish. “My mom is a genius!” he giggled, pulling his shirt over his head. He stood up to undress completely and then stripped Kris down to his briefs. “It’s so much easier to get you naked now. I’ll have to go out and find you some breakaway underwear, too.”

Kris threw his head back and laughed. “Maybe I’ll just skip those from now on.”

“Mmm, I think I love that idea,” Adam purred as he straddled his sexy boyfriend. He leaned over, took a nipple into his mouth and licked it into an erect peak, his tongue pressing repeatedly against the textured skin as it contracted and darkened. A low moan of pleasure rumbled from the man beneath him and Adam placed a hand on Kris’ neck so he could feel the vibrations thrum through his fingers and down to his dick while he sucked and sucked.

“Adam.” His voice was hoarse already and they’d barely started.

Adam didn’t relent until warm wetness was seeping through cotton onto his belly and his mouth began to water for that hard, pulsing cock that he could feel twitching against his body. “So sexy, angel,” he breathed when he let go of Kris’ nipple at last and kissed his way down. Calloused fingers scrabbled at his hair and found purchase as Adam opened his jaws and closed them over Kris’ bulge.

“Uhhh, baby…yessss.”

Lick. Suck. Nibble. Mouth. Blow. Adam used every trick he knew to get Kris off without removing his underwear because he thought it was fucking hot that way. His spit mixed with precum and the taste of dryer sheets. Nose buried in it all, Adam tilted his head and started jerking his mouth from side to side.

“You’re…killing me here…shit,” Kris panted and wrapped his good leg around Adam’s back. “Take them off…off…oh god!” Fingers yanked, muscles clenched and the hot cum had nowhere to go. Adam sucked at it through the fabric, making Kris yelp a little and shudder a lot.

“Yum. Freshly laundered jizz. I think I found a favorite flavor,” Adam teased when he was finished torturing his lover.

“Evil. So evil,” moaned Kris as he wriggled out of the sopping wet cotton.

Adam laughed and bit him playfully on the thigh before reaching to the nightstand for some lube. “You know you love it. Now roll over so I can keep having my way with you.” Because I’m fucking awesome and I deserve some ass.

One of Adam’s favorite positions happened to be one of the easiest for Kris with his cast. The couple had experimented during the weekend until they were successful in finding several ways to have sex that didn’t bother Kris’ leg. It was such a hardship, really.

“Oooh, twist my arm why don’t you,” Kris giggled as he began to shift onto his right side. Adam could curl almost completely around him this way, and soon they were spooned together with both of their right legs straight and their left ones bent at the knee like the number four. “I’ll love you forever if you bite me the whole time,” said Kris as Adam slicked up.

“You are so on, gorgeous.” With the first chomp of his teeth on tender neck flesh, Adam drove into sweet tightness and locked his arms around Kris’ chest. His groan was muffled and saliva garbled
but he couldn’t help himself. It felt so damn good and his boyfriend’s gasping breaths just made him
bite harder and thrust faster. Every time he tasted a hint of copper he moved on to another spot,
sinking his jaws into the softness below tufts of fine hair at the nape of Kris’ neck, craning around to
suck at the hollow of his throat and never ceasing the slap slap slap of skin on skin as he fucked and
took what was willing offered to him until the silence was shattered by a cry that claimed Kris as
rightfully his.

He made Kris come with his teeth.

And that’s how his innocent angel ended up with so many hickeys and bite marks that he had to
wear a turtleneck despite the fact that it looked ridiculous with his athletic pants. Matt and Alisan
showed up at seven and gave him knowing looks punctuated by snorts of laughter. “Hey, no making
fun of the injured or I’ll sick my nurse on you!”

Adam smiled fondly at him, glad that he’d decided to stay and enjoy the camaraderie even though he
had to get through some anxiety. It’s worth it. He tried not to worry about Matt touching and moving
things and just focused on the warmth of Kris pressed up against him as they watched a movie and
ate dessert. He’d made homemade pumpkin pie for everyone because, of course, pumpkin was on
the list of healing foods.

Chapter 53

Kris adjusted his body a little so that he was more comfortable in Adam’s arms, sighing at the
warmth that enveloped him even though he was already hot in the turtleneck hiding his numerous
love bites. His injured leg rested on the coffee table in front of the couch, just to the left of an empty
plate with a few pie crumbs on it that Fifi had tried to lick off earlier. She had given up was now
perched on the arm of the oversized chair occupied by Matt and Alisan, her eyes half closed in an
expression of doggie bliss as Alisan slowly scratched her behind the ears.

The skin beneath Kris’ cast was slightly itchy but he tried to ignore it, focusing instead on how nice it
felt to have company at their apartment, like he and Adam were finally connecting to the world as a
couple. He looked over at Alisan all curled up like a cat in Matt’s lap and smiled at the way they fit
together. His best friend had come bearing gifts of cold beer and the kind of chips that Adam never
bought but Kris adored – Ruffles sour cream and cheddar, loaded with salt, fat, MSG and god only
knows what else. Heaven. He cracked a yawn and thought about going shopping with Adam one of
these times so he could get more foods he liked to eat. Or I could just give him a list.

Adam glanced down at Kris, winked and then kissed his temple before returning to the movie they
were watching, ‘School of Rock.’ He may have appeared to be comfortable on the outside, but Kris
could feel the tightness in Adam’s muscles and saw how his eyes darted over to Matt every once in a
while. The four of them would have been more animated about the movie, but they’d all seen it
before and were only watching it as a way to make things less stressful for Adam. So glad he stayed
though.

Kris felt insanely proud of his boyfriend and had been overjoyed when Adam came home all puffed
up and self-assured. He had no idea what’d happened at therapy, but whatever it was surely seemed
to be making a difference in how Adam was carrying himself this evening despite his anxiety.

“I love this part,” said Matt, starting to chuckle as Jack Black rocked out on the screen in that manic
way only he can pull off. Matt stopped stroking Alisan’s cheek, bobbing his head in time to the music and yelped loudly when his girlfriend suddenly bit his fingertip. Fifi flinched at the unexpected noise and looked at Matt like it was his fault for disturbing her peace. “Oh I see how it works,” he laughed, glancing over at Adam. “You did try to warn me, didn’t you?” Alisan giggled and resumed petting Fifi.

“Yes I did,” snickered Adam, “she’s a wicked girl, my Ali.” His heartbeat slowed down just a fraction against Kris’ ear pressed to his chest.

Nice. “Mind getting me another beer?”

“Sure thing.” Adam had wrinkled his nose at the six-pack of Budweiser tucked under Matt’s arm at first, but one glance at Kris’ delighted face and he’d quickly popped one open for him. When Adam got up and went into the kitchen, Matt booted Alisan off and followed him. Seeing as there was no wall separating the rooms, it was easy to hear their voices even over the movie.

“Adam,” Matt began, “just wanted to thank you for inviting me over, man. I appreciate it.”

Although Kris couldn’t see him, he was positive that Adam looked a little tense. Sure enough, he sounded like he wasn’t sure how to respond. “Uh, it’s fine. No problem… glad you’re here. Erm, another beer?”

“Yeah, thanks.”

He’s doing great. Kris peered at Alisan who was wearing a broad smile that took up her whole face. This must be so incredible for her, too. It was funny how things were working out. Alisan and Matt hooking up was probably one of the best things to happen for Adam in terms of practicing social skills. His new job will be good for that, too. Tommy is awesome. Kris remembered just then how Adam had said that Tommy was cute. Hmph. He told himself to stop being ridiculous because even if Tommy were gay he wouldn’t be a threat; no one was. You just want to be the only attractive man on the planet in Adam’s eyes. Alright yeah I do, so what?

Adam and Matt returned, each with a beer in hand. Once everyone was resettled, Kris planted a huge, wet kiss on his lover’s lips, ignoring the can of brew for the moment. He’s mine. But the feeling of possession was short lived. A choking sob suddenly caught in Kris’ throat as a shadow of fear wrapped around his heart and tried to suffocate it with a memory of the car crash three days ago. The pitiful sound died against Adam’s mouth.

“Kris, what’s the matter? Is it your leg?”

“No…I just…” He shuddered and clung to his boyfriend, pushing his face into Adam’s chest. He didn’t care that Matt and Alisan were staring at him in concern. “I remembered the accident for a minute, that’s all,” he mumbled, trying to mentally shake off the horrible image of his love, unconscious and non-responsive. His irrational brain wanted to yell at Adam never to scare him like that again. He’d been in excruciating pain when the impact had broken his leg, but that was nothing compared to the rush of terror at not being able to wake Adam up. And then to be whisked away so fast without knowing…

“Hey, hey…it’s all right…I know, baby. Come here.” Kris was trembling a little as Adam pulled him onto his lap sideways. Any time. It could happen at any time. He could be taken away from me in an instant. Adam held him tightly and whispered into his ear, “I’ve got you, angel. I’m not going anywhere.”
“Um, maybe me and Ali should go,” suggested Matt in a serious tone.

Kris shook his head. “No, please don’t. I’ll be fine,” he said in what he hoped was a reassuring way. “Let’s finish the movie. I could use the humor and I really like having you guys here.” Just focus. It happened and it’s over now. There’s no use in worrying. Matt smiled and nodded. Kris burrowed deeper into his Adam cocoon and let himself get lost in the strong arms wrapped protectively around him and the sound of his lover’s steady breathing. Warm puffs of sweet air tickled his cheek and brushed past his lips like a phantom kiss, calming him as he inhaled the scent of pumpkin pie and Adam. By the time the movie was over, he felt considerably better and was even up for a game of Uno afterwards. It was the only game Adam seemed to own and Kris’ were still packed in a box somewhere. Adam was hesitant at first, but he finally agreed to participate on the condition that they play as teams because he wasn’t willing to let Kris get off of his lap. Good. I didn’t want to move anyway.

“No, no, don’t put that one down,” said Alisan to Matt. “Do this one instead.” She pointed at a card and smirked over the coffee table at Adam and Kris.

“Are you sure? Shouldn’t we save it?”

“Of course I’m sure. Besides, I’ll bet you anything that they’ve got a draw four over there,” she said with a knowing look at Adam’s smug grin. “Can’t let them win now can we?”

Kris giggled as he held their last two cards close to his chest, his eyes twinkling with innocent mirth at how fun it was to be doing simple things like this with Adam. They won despite Alisan’s machinations and stuck their tongues out at the other team in unison. As the evening wore on, Adam became increasingly relaxed and when it was time for their guests to leave, he invited Matt to come back over this weekend.

Wow. Glad I stood my ground this morning. Kris was so curious about the therapy session, and later that night when the couple was snuggling in bed, he asked about it.

Adam hummed and ran his fingers down Kris’ bare arm. “I think I’m learning to like myself a little.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

Kris wanted to jump up and down at this news, to throw a party so that everyone they knew could applaud the brave man, but he settled for a fervent, “awesome,” because it was a more normal response and seemed to fit the moment.

A strong March wind began to blow through the night, whistling in between leaves and rushing past windows with increasing power, but Kris ignored it and fell asleep to the lullaby of Adam’s heartbeat and soft hands.

***

The week went by slower than a man on crutches. At first Kris was excited about all the spare time
he had to play music, draw and be with his lover, but after a few days he began to get restless. Although he didn’t miss working at Macy’s one damn bit, sitting on his ass day after day was fast becoming old. The only thing that helped take the edge off of his excess energy was sex, but Adam had been spending a lot of time in the studio with the goal of finishing his demo by the weekend. While Kris supported that and Adam’s seemingly renewed sense of purpose, it did leave him with more alone time than he was accustomed to. There were only so many hours he could sit before becoming agitated, and hobbling around the apartment wasn’t exactly fun or easy either. He was really looking forward to Fifi’s obedience class and the opportunity to get out of the apartment. True, part of him feared getting back into a car again, but he was willing to risk a bit of anxiety for the sake of sanity.

Kris had asked Adam to bring home a case of beer on Tuesday, and by Thursday he’d discovered that the more he drank, the calmer and more relaxed he felt. That night Adam had carried him to bed after he’d passed out on the couch, and Friday afternoon found him splayed out in the exact same spot where he’d fallen asleep. He hadn’t showered and his mouth reeked of stale beer mixed with morning breath. There’s nothing ever good on at this hour. He took a swig of his fourth Budweiser and suppressed a belch. Court TV was inane in his opinion, but at least the alcohol was making it more bearable and kind of funny.

Adam came out of the studio at two o’clock looking ecstatic. “I did it! I’m finished!” he exclaimed with a double fist pump.

Kris raised his head off the couch pillow a few inches and smiled blearily. “Thas great,” he said with a bit of slur to his words before letting gravity return his heavy, wobbly skull back down. Something in the corner of his mind said that he should be showing more excitement than this, but he couldn’t seem to muster any at the moment. He knows I’m happy for him.

Adam’s arms fell limply to his sides and he frowned, clearly disappointed. “Is that it? How about a little more enthusiasm, Kris?” There was a hint of bite to his tone.

“I said it was great, and it is. It’s really great,” Kris responded with the limited vocabulary that was at his disposal in this state. He grimaced when Adam sat down next to him and surveyed the empty beer cans on the coffee table. Oh god, he’s going to lecture me, I just know it.

“How long have you been drinking?”

Kris rolled his eyes and puffed out a breath of annoyance. “I dunno, whazzit matter anyway?” he retorted, ignoring Adam’s hand waving the air to dispel the awful smell of rotting hops.

“Look, I know you’re bored and you like beer, but don’t you think you’re overdoing it?” he said with equal parts of concern and irritation woven together, like a momma bear who is loosing her patience.

“Stop nagging!” Kris snapped suddenly. “Yer always tellin’ me what to do an’ I’m sick of it!” This was only partially accurate. Adam did have controlling tendencies to be sure and he was doing his best to nurse Kris back to health, but ‘nagging’ was definitely an alcohol-induced exaggeration. Kris crossed his arms over his chest. “I’m a big boy you know, I kin look after myself.”

A flash of hurt flickered in Adam’s eyes, but it was quickly replaced by anger. “Is that right. The past two days you’ve done nothing but lay around and drink. You stopped drawing and playing your guitar and it seems like you only get up to piss and raid the fridge. I’m surprised you even let Fifi out when she rings the bell. So you tell me, how is that taking care of yourself, huh?”
Kris’ head was starting to throb. Why can’t he just leave me in peace? I was so relaxed. “Jus knock off the lecture already ‘cause I don’t fuckin’ need it!” he shouted. Their little pup jerked out of her nap on the floor and whined.

“Fine. Do whatever the fuck you want.” Adam stood up, walked into the bedroom and slammed the door shut.

“Fine I will!” Kris yelled after him, which only made his headache worse. He lay there stewing in righteous indignation while two people on TV bickered over an unpaid credit card bill. What gives him the right, bossing me around all the time? Telling me what I should eat and when to ice my leg. I’m not a baby.

After a few minutes of this he dozed off, and when he woke up two hours later he felt like crap both physically and emotionally. It didn’t help that Fifi was curled up on his stomach. Her warm presence just served to increase the immediate sense of guilt twisting his gut since Adam probably needed her comfort more.

“Shit. Shit, shit, shit. What the hell is wrong with me?” He was only trying to help, you idiot, and you yelled at him for no good reason. And he was all excited about finishing his demo, too. Kris groaned at the dull ache punishing his head and thought he probably deserved it. Fifi didn’t seem to want to move, but he had amends to make and gently set her on the ground. With an almighty effort he hauled himself off the couch, grabbed his crutches and ‘walked’ to the bathroom. The mirror inside confirmed that he looked like the living dead, and once he was done relieving his bladder, Kris decided to take a shower before making up with his boyfriend. After turning on the water and carefully removing his cast, he sat down on the shower chair with toothbrush and paste in hand and scrubbed his teeth extra hard in case there was any stupidity left in his mouth.

It took him thirty minutes to get clean and shaved and by that time his headache was gone as well as the stank. He wrapped a towel tightly around his waist so it wouldn’t slip and went to apologize.

Adam was asleep, curled up on his right side in the middle of the bed with a small pile of used tissues near his face. You made him cry. It was the first time that Kris suspected he was the direct cause of Adam’s tears, and even though he knew relationships were full of ups and downs, it still broke his heart. He’s got enough to cry about in life. He doesn’t need that kind of shit from you. A heavy sigh leaked from his lungs as he set his crutches aside and tossed the tissues onto the nightstand so he could lay down facing Adam. He touched a finger to his favorite freckle and watched as puffy eyelids opened to reveal a scene of blue and dark pink. A crust of dried tears rimmed Adam’s bloodshot eyes like a mockery of eyeliner. There was no glamour there, just pain and vulnerability.

“I’m sorry,” Kris said at once in the softest voice possible, as if that would make up for his earlier shouting.

Adam just stared for a few seconds, his mouth turned down as a glassy sheen began to form over his eyes. “Do you really think I nag you?” he croaked.

“Oh babe, no I don’t. I’m just a dumbass and I wasn’t thinking. I’m so sorry I snapped and shouted at you.” He rubbed his thumb under one of Adam’s eyes to erase the flakes of hurt.

“You were drunk.”

“A little.”

Adam sniffed. “Why are you doing that?”
“Because I’m an idiot,” said Kris, shaking his head. “It’s hard not to be able to do things like I’m used to, but that’s no excuse really. I should find better ways to deal with it.”

“I…I wanted to have sex…make everything better,” Adam whispered, shifting his eyes back and forth. Kris heard that awful self-doubt slip into his voice and felt like the scum of the earth for bringing it back.

“But you didn’t. You stayed strong, baby, stronger than me, which is why you kick ass,” he said with a small smile. “You kick ass for a lot of reasons.” Kris reached out to caress Adam’s forehead just as it furrowed.

“I do and…and that was pretty sucky of you, Kris,” Adam stated, sounding a little stronger. “But I understand why you’re struggling just…don’t do that, you know, drink like that to escape even if it’s because of boredom. Escaping…it’s not good for you.”

*He’s right, and he would know.* “Adam…I’m so sorry. You’re right and I won’t do it again, I promise. Please forgive me?”

Adam replied by tugging at Kris’ towel. “You deserve some punishment,” he said quietly with just a hint of a smirk creeping onto his soft lips. “I’ll forgive you afterwards.”

“I think I can live with that.” He watched Adam undress and felt damn lucky to have such an amazing partner.

They had a full hour before Adam needed to eat and get ready for work. *Plenty of time.*

In the aftermath, Kris’ sex-hazed mind finally remembered why Adam had been so elated this afternoon. “I love you,” he said, “and I’m really happy that you finished your demo today.”

“Thanks…I love you, too. Am I crushing you?”

“A little.”

“Good.”

Kris chuckled, with difficulty.

“Angel?”

“Mmm?”

“You could totally forget about Macy’s if you wanted to. I know they want you back when your doctor clears it but…you have all this time now to find a job performing somewhere and you’re too talented not to be doing that.”

“Hmm, that’s an idea.”

“Oh, and by the way…I forgive you.”
Chapter 54

The night was deathly still when Adam opened his eyes, and the moonless sky outside only added to the utter hush of the black pressing around him. He tried to think what had woken him so suddenly. Nothing presented itself. Little wisps of air tickled his chest, but no sounds broke the quiet except for the virtually silent breathing of his sleeping lover who was draped across him. He instinctually looked down, wanting to see Kris’ face against his skin, but it was too dark. I’m starting my new job today. I need to be rested. He told himself to go back to sleep, but now that he was awake, the gears of his brain began crank out the most unhelpful incarnations of worry. What if I can’t do it? What if I freak out? Will they fire me on my first day? Oh fuckity fuck…I must be fucking insane to do being doing this!

His arms, already wrapped around Kris, tightened as he attempted to draw comfort from their closeness. Just go back to sleep…don’t think about it…fuck! It’s incredible how fast the nervous system can jumpstart from seemingly dormant to spastic in a matter of seconds; Adam’s heart might as well belong to a hummingbird at the rate it was going now. Don’t panic…don’t…

“Adam? You all right?”

He hadn’t realized he’d been squeezing Kris so hard and forced his arms to loosen their grip. “Sorry angel, I’m f-fine,” he said in a high, squeaky voice that belied his words.

“You are not fine.” Kris rolled over and turned on the little bedside lamp, which cast a soft, warm glow that illuminated Adam’s stricken face. “But you will be,” he murmured as he began to caress around large blue eyes full of anxiety. “Worried about work?”

Adam nodded, trying to slow his breathing by staring into those calm, mocha orbs gazing down at him. Don’t be such a wuss, Lambert. Sure you’ll probably fail, but be a man about it anyways. NO! Get the fuck out! It’s normal to be nervous! I’m not going to fail! Suddenly he grabbed Kris’ face and kissed him hard, desperate to shut out the arguing thoughts in his head and to erase the dread coursing through his veins. His tongue pushed deeply, fervently, into Kris’ open mouth causing all the testosterone to cheer in victory on it’s ride down to his swelling length. Escaping again, are you? Didn’t you tell Kris that it was a bad idea to escape?

“Shit.” He broke the kiss abruptly, saw the knowing look in his boyfriend’s eyes and cringed. “Sorry….”

“We?” said Kris softly, halting Adam’s words with a finger, “don’t apologize.”

They lay still like that for a moment. Adam felt kindness in the calloused digit on his lips and searched that sweet face for answers until he had to ask the question. “Why didn’t you stop me?”

“Because I knew you’d stop yourself,” Kris responded with a loving sort of smirk. “That’s how amazing and kick ass you are.”

Adam was finding it hard to decide which thought to listen to, the one that said Kris was right or the other that was scolding him for slipping in the first place. He sighed heavily, thinking how nice it would be if he could get through just one day without fighting himself. Fortunately, his love for the man grinning at him took over, trumping both the battle and his anxiety and this time when he pulled Kris in, it felt right.
The soft presses of their lips were so gentle that eventually Adam fell asleep to them.

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“I don’t know about this shirt…maybe I should change it back to the other one. And my hair isn’t working right today, what the hell!” Adam studied himself in the full-length mirror he’d recently purchased and frowned. He’d been up since six trying to prepare for his first day at Sew Your Soul, but it wasn’t going very smoothly because he didn’t know how to dress for a work environment that wasn’t a club. *I should have figured this out yesterday! Why the fuck did I wait until this morning?*

“You look great,” said Kris from their bed. It was amazing that he was even visible given the enormous piles of discarded clothing all over it.

“You’re just saying that.” Adam glanced over at him, trying to determine if he was being serious or patronizing.

“No I’m not. Really. I mean think about what Tommy was wearing when you applied for the job…black jeans and a black long sleeve shirt. That’s pretty much what you’ve got on right now and it’s very flattering, too.”

*He sounds serious.* Adam took another look in the mirror. The jeans were fitting, not too tight, and the subtle threads of silver in his button down made it distinctive but not flashy. “Okay, but what about my hair? Isn’t it too…I don’t know…flat?” *I should’ve used more mousse.* It was his typical ‘do but he’d toned it down a little until he could get a better feel for the atmosphere at the shop.

“Well, I love it natural just as much as styled.” Kris emerged from the clothing mountains and shuffled over to Adam on his crutches. “You’re going to be fine.”

The mirror revealed Adam’s fear perfectly; his shaking hands, too wide eyes and slightly heaving chest were an exact match to the feeling of a thousand tiny tree frogs leaping around in his stomach. “What if I’m not fine? What if something happens and they fire me?”

“Then you’ll get a different job,” said Kris calmly.

“And what if I get fired from that one, too? Kris…what if I can’t do this?” There was a note of desperation in Adam’s voice and he was close to actually panicking again when Kris spoke.

“Would you really walk out the door if you thought you couldn’t?”

It was the same kind of hit-you-over-the-head-nicely thing that Sheila would say and had a similar effect of making Adam remember how far he’d come in the past six months. “No. No, I wouldn’t.” The words didn’t magically remove his anxiety, but they tempered it with a surge of self-confidence. He gave the frogs some insects – he was pretty sure that’s what frogs eat – and they settled a bit. “Thank you. Let me put these clothes away and then I’ll make some breakfast.”

It was still only eight o’clock and since he didn’t have to be to work until ten, Adam made a meal of poached eggs on toast, turkey sausage links and hash browns (a Kris favorite). The cooking also helped keep his nerves from gaining the upper hand again. He didn’t even notice his boyfriend
coming up behind him until he felt a chin on his shoulder.

“Do you know how sexy you look in an apron?” Kris purred.

“I do not, you dork,” he chuckled. The bright yellow apron was probably the least attractive thing he’d ever put on his body, but it was made out of vinyl and would save his clothing from grease spatters. “I think the smell of frying potatoes is messing with your mind.”

Kris nuzzled his ear and whispered, “I’ll tell you what’s messing with my mind… your hot ass, that’s what.”

The spatula in Adam’s hand nearly fell into the pan as a shudder ran down his spine to the backs of both knees, making them buckle a little. “I swear to god if I didn’t have to go to work…you wicked little tease!”

“Oh I’m sorry, am I distracting you?” Kris taunted while continuing to nip and lick around Adam’s ear gauges.

“You are in so much trouble when I get home.”

“Can’t wait,” breathed the evil man hotly.

“So much trouble,” Adam repeated under his breath, already plotting a way to get revenge.

At nine-thirty he was standing at the door holding Fifi close his chest. Her backside wagged along with her tail as she strained her little head up, trying to kiss his face. Walk out the door, Adam, you can do this. He’d been in the same spot for about ten minutes. “I’m finished at three, so…”

“So I’ll see you soon after that,” Kris finished for him. He moved forward from where he’d been leaning against the wall and touched their lips together over Fifi’s squirming body. The puppy managed a two for one deal and got both chins with her teeny tongue. “You’re going to do great,” Kris assured Adam after ending the kiss.

He nodded robotically, head moving up and down because it was the proper response. “Okay, I’m going now,” he said, trying not to let his voice waver as he finally put Fifi down. She started sniffing at his new boots. With so many emotions and thoughts pulling at him, Adam wanted nothing more than to stand on this piece of floor tile forever, but he made himself smile at Kris, say I love you and leave before he changed his mind. The act of physically exiting the apartment felt like a life changing moment that contrasted sharply to his nameless neighbor walking her dog nearby. I’m just heading off to work, no big deal. Everyone is a little anxious on their first day of something new. He knew that ‘a little anxious’ was a gross understatement, but the need to normalize his feelings made him not care.

It was unfortunate that his car was still being repaired because the added familiarity would have been nice, but Kris’ blue Ford had a decent enough sound system and singing along to ‘We are the Champions’ by Queen was a must right then. Adam played it on repeat, punching out every note with a vengeance until he arrived outside the shop and parked at nine forty-five. Ten fingers strangled the steering wheel. “Get out get out get out get out. Get out of the car.” The eye on the Sew Your Soul sign was staring at him, and he stared back. “I like the eye shadow,” he told it, and then laughed at himself for talking to a logo. Something beneath the sign suddenly glimmered in the sun. The jacket.
The mystical garment drew him out of the car the way that the open sky calls to an emerging butterfly whose wings are still drying. Adam walked trance-like to the window and pressed his face to it, feeling both creeped out and intensely fascinated by the weird connection he had to the gold jacket. What was it about the damn thing? He shook his head, suddenly remembering why he was here. Tommy was visible at the counter, his head resting in one hand as he turned the pages of a magazine. His hair was all blond now and Adam thought it suited him even better. *Alright, I can do this. Here we go.*

Tommy looked up at the sound of the bell that chimed when Adam opened the door. “Come on back,” he said in that laid back manner he had. There was no one else in the store, thankfully, and Adam did his best to master the voice telling him to turn and run as he moved across the room. He thrust out his chest just a little. “Alex wants to meet you right away and then you and I can go through some things later,” said Tommy, gesturing Adam to a back door behind the counter. The young man’s voice was slightly feminine and nasal but so mellow that it was soothing.

Adam nodded, grateful that Tommy hadn’t tried to touch him, and entered the small workshop. It was nothing like the reality TV shows where high strung people run around with measuring tapes, draping expensive fabrics on mannequins as they yelled at their assistants. Quiet, cluttered and brightly lit by an enormous window, the studio reminded him of the Allen’s living room, cozy and lived in. Alex was nowhere in sight. *Maybe he’s on break and Tommy forgot.* But just then a man stood up from behind a drawing board. *Jesus!* Adam almost swore out loud at the sudden appearance of his new boss.

“Ahhh, you’re here. Yes.” Light blue eyes framed by shaggy brown hair studied him for a moment, and the tiny bit of gray in his full beard made Adam feel instantly more at ease despite just having had the crap scared out of him. “Tell me what you think of this design,” said Alex, and then promptly disappeared again. *Okay, that was really bizarre.* The man was obviously one of those eccentric artist types. Adam suppressed a giggle because that’s always how he’d classified himself, except he was clearly more organized than Alex. He walked toward the drawing board past a mannequin, a large worktable and a sewing machine table. The latter two were jumbled with a combination of fabric, clothes, magazines, patterns, sewing implements and an assortment of coffee mugs among other things. Even the mannequin seemed to be wearing at least five garments.

Adam assumed that Alex wanted to test his eye for fashion, and although he was still nervous overall, he felt fairly certain he’d pass with flying colors. He found the older man sitting on a wooden stool, stroking his beard and staring at a hand drawn figure wearing a pair of red pants. There wasn’t a lot of room for Adam behind the board and he was distinctly uncomfortable with the lack of personal space, but he tried to ignore it so he could focus on the test. He swallowed a few times before sharing his thoughts. *I’m not going to lie. What value would I be if I wasn’t honest?* This had nothing to do with social skills; to Adam it was strictly about fashion sense. “They fit well on him, but I think the zippers are misplaced.”

Alex didn’t look away from the paper. “Go on.”

“They’re too high on his thighs and it distracts from the cross hatching you put near the pockets.”

“Mhmm. But if I move them to the lower leg, the thigh will be too bare.”

Adam tilted his head, trying to envision it. “That’s true. I guess you could always extend the pattern down from the pocket area, maybe drag it across to the inside of the knee.”

“Yes,” said Alex, “Tommy was right about you.”
He wasn’t sure what Tommy had said about him, but he really didn’t care. The flush of pride that briefly stained his cheeks felt good. *I passed.*

Without another word, Alex set him to sewing beads onto a shirt, which would have been easy enough if he weren’t trying to do it amidst so much disorder. Somehow Adam was going to have to get his boss to clean up. *I could do it myself if he’d let me.* In spite of the physical chaos, Adam’s internal mess of emotions slowly began to sort itself out and after an hour and a half of silent work, his tension was gone. He liked the fact that Alex wasn’t the chatty type and seemed to keep to himself; it made the need for socializing essentially nonexistent. Both were intent on what they were doing and it was sufficient.

At noon Tommy poked his head in. “Alex?” A hand waved above the drawing board in a dismissing gesture and Tommy beckoned Adam out of the room. *I guess they don’t need to talk to understand each other.* “So what do you think of him?” asked Tommy when they were both back behind the counter.

“Quiet. Genius.”

“Yep. You’ll get used to the quiet I promise,” he said, not knowing that it wouldn’t take any adjustment on Adam’s part at all. “He’s also a perfectionist…and don’t ever get his coffee order wrong,” chuckled Tommy as he pulled out a small stack of forms from a drawer. “I have to go over these with you and then I’ll show you how to work the register. It’s all really simple.” Tommy moved closer until their shoulders were only a foot apart and began to show him the papers.

Adam flinched on reflex.

“You all right?”

*Calm down, just…don’t mess this up. He’s not even touching you. Too close, he’s too close to me! Concentrate! Nothing bad is going to happen.* Adam had been disappointed when Kris told him that Tommy wasn’t gay; straight males his own age were number one on his list of people to avoid.

“Yeah, I just…” Adam shrugged, not sure how to finish the sentence. He attempted to get his anxiety under control, acutely aware of the customers in the store milling about. “It’s nothing, go ahead,” he said with a massive effort to shake it off, staring at the forms as if they could act as a physical barrier between the two of them.

To his credit, Tommy ignored any awkwardness and started telling Adam all about the company, the employee benefits, and policies. Adam was surprised that he qualified for health insurance. He’d always had to purchase his own privately and it was damn expensive. When they got to the employee discount section, Adam’s ears perked up and suddenly he wondered why the jacket in the window hadn’t been purchased yet.

“I don’t know,” said Tommy. “Plenty of people admire it so I’m not sure why it’s still here. It’s the first jacket that Alex ever designed. Obviously it costs a fortune because of that, but there’s people who shop here that can afford it I’m sure.”

*Better start saving up, and fast before it vanishes.* When he looked down and saw that they were done with the forms, Adam surreptitiously put a little more distance in between himself and the other man by pretending to scratch his leg. *That’s better.*

Tommy went on to explain that Alex made all the clothing by hand, which was why most of the
items in the store were so pricey. Many people also came to Alex for custom orders and Sew Your Soul relied on these patrons to help sustain the business. Tommy was in charge of ordering things like belts, jewelry and sunglasses. “He lets me look through catalogues and pick out what I think we should get.”

*Say something nice.* Sheila had reminded him that giving complements is part of social skills 101 and he didn’t have Kris to lean on like he did around Matt. Back in high school Adam had been voted one of the most outgoing kids in his class, but all that changed with his trauma. *It’ll come back with practice…so practice.* “You have good taste,” Adam mumbled, remembering how many accessories he’d been tempted to buy when perusing the store a couple weeks back.

“Thanks. Wish some of it would rub off on my new roommate,” Tommy replied with a smirk that Adam had no problem returning. Matt was ten times worse than Kris in the fashion department. A sharply dressed older woman came over carrying a few garments and Adam watched as his colleague checked the handwritten price tags and punched the numbers into the computer. *Doesn’t look hard.* “Alex prices all of the clothing,” Tommy stated once he was finished with the customer, “and I take care of the stuff we order so you won’t have to worry about that.”

By twelve-thirty Adam had gotten the hang of the register but was having a difficult time imitating Tommy’s relaxed manner with the public. The women weren’t a problem, but it was another story entirely with the men. His smiles were forced and unnatural because all his brain could think about was that any moment someone might walk in who looked like one of his attackers. He was on edge and Tommy would have to be blind not to notice it.

“Are you sure you’re all right?” he asked Adam after the fifth man walked away from the counter wearing a frown. “You look…tense.”

Adam had a statement prepared. He’d foolishly hoped he wouldn’t have to use it, but not being nervous right now was like expecting a baby bird to fly only a few days after hatching. “I’m not very good around men, especially ones close to my age,” he muttered to the countertop, “but I need to learn how to get over that. This job is really important to me.”

*Please let that be enough.* All he could hear was the sound of people browsing the store and the ever lovely shame laughing manically at him. *He’s not saying anything. Oh god, I’m going to get fired!* Adam’s pulse began to race and he chanced a look at Tommy, whose elfish face was unreadable.

“Well, I’m not going to deny that customer services is really important,” he began, showing that he’d understood Adam completely by giving him more personal space, “but I still think you’re the right man for the job. Um, let me just go talk to Alex. Can you handle being out here for about five minutes by yourself?”

This was exactly the kind thing that made Adam feel like a damaged freak and it took every ounce of mental strength he possessed not to flee from the shame and embarrassment, not to run home to Kris and fuck his brains out. His jaw tightened and he nodded shortly. *I CAN FUCKING DO THIS! I’M NOT A DAMAGED FREAK!* He had to yell to convince himself, because he wasn’t quite sure he was right about that. Tommy left Adam standing there silently waging a brutal war against the urge to use. It was costing him everything.

“Hi mister, wanna see my puppy?”

Some unexpected voices in this world are a slap in the face while others carry no power at all, but the one emanating from the tiny girl gazing up at Adam was “just right” like the porridge from the Three Little Bears. Why she didn’t fear approaching a man with a storm on his face was anyone’s guess,
but no trepidation marred her innocence as she held up a stuffed dog for Adam to examine.

Every single soldier fighting the battle in his head suddenly laid down their weapons and said, “awwwww.” He gasped and then looked down into shining brown eyes. “Your puppy? Of course I wanna see.” It was one of those Pound Puppies from the eighties, gray with floppy ears and a red collar. Adam used to have a Dalmatian one just like it.

“His name is Becky,” said the child. She looked to be about five and had long brown curls that bounced when she spoke.

“That’s a perfect name for him,” Adam replied as his heart rate geared down to normal speed.

“Damien said that Becky is a girls name, but momma said I can call him whatever I want!” she declared with a firm nod. Boing, boing went the tresses.

So cute! “Well your momma is absolutely right about that.” He leaned on the counter and gave her a real smile. “My name is Adam, what’s yours?”

“Tabby. See? Tabby and Becky!”

Adam chuckled at her perfect logic in choosing a name for her dog. “And where is your momma, Tabby?”

“Over…oh! She’s right here! This is Adam and he said Becky’s a good name, too!”

“What an intelligent young man,” said the woman, smiling softly at Adam. “Time to go, Tabby.”

“Bye, Adam!”

“Bye,” he called out as his savior of the day and her mother left the shop hand in hand. He watched until they were out of sight and when he straightened up, he saw that Tommy was there with a big grin on his face that showed off his dimples. “Um, cute little kid,” said Adam, feeling just a trace of embarrassment return.

“Totally adorable. So, Alex said that you have to keep working here. He said I’m supposed to do whatever it takes to help you adjust and feel comfortable, even if that means skipping my lunch break,” Tommy said with a small laugh. “He really likes you and I’m glad because he’s been through a ton of assistants that haven’t panned out.”

Wow! But he doesn’t even know me! We barely even spoke! It was the last straw that broke down any resistance Adam had about being employed at Sew Your Soul. Between Alex and the jacket and the fact that Tommy was Matt’s roommate…even the little girl coming in at the perfect moment…the universe was giving him a clear message and he was in, with both feet firmly planted, because you just don’t ignore shit like that. This is still going to be fucking hard. Yep.

“I’m in, Tommy, and I’ll try to learn as fast as I can.”

“Don’t sweat it. We’ll work everything out. That’s the way we roll around here,” he said breezily.

Damn, is he always this chill?

“Why don’t you go grab lunch if you’re hungry. Oh, and while you’re at it, could you bring me back
some tacos? I’m starving!”

Ahhh, now that he gets excited about.

After lunch, Adam spent the rest of his shift safely hidden away in the studio. When he was finished with the beadwork, Alex asked him to spend time looking through several volumes of photos and sketches of clothing he’d designed. *I can’t believe I’m getting paid for this.*

Alex broke the silence at quarter to three. “I hear you like my jacket.”

“I do.”

“Why?”

Adam stopped turning the pages of the album, wondering how truthful he should be. *The man showed faith in me. I owe him.* “It speaks to me. I feel connected to it somehow and I don’t know why.”

“Hmm. What other jobs do you have?”

“I’m a singer. I perform at a club not far from here.”

“Hmm,” Alex said again. “Alright. You can go home now.”

Adam liked his boss.

On the drive home he tried to process everything that had happened that day, the ups and downs, the mystery and revelation, but his brain was too damn tired. All he really wanted to think about anyway was Kris and how good it would feel to hold him tight. And then there was the matter of the revenge he’d promised his lover this morning. *Oh yes…that is going to be fucking hot. Mmmmm.* Adam pressed the heel of his hand to his hardening length and grinned wickedly. *I am such a badass motherfucker.*

The first one to greet him when he walked through the door, however, was Fifi. She seemed to be beside herself with joy and even barked a few times as she raced around his feet and leapt into the air. “She missed you,” laughed Kris from the couch. He was showered and dressed in only a pair of black boxer briefs.

*Yum.* “I can see that,” he returned with a smile as he picked up his puppy and tried to hold her manically squirming body. “Looks like you need some playtime, girl.” *That actually works perfectly into my plan.* Adam noticed the searching expression on Kris’ face and knew that he was wondering how work had gone. He put Fifi down, dropped his wallet and keys on the little table by the door and walked over to the couch. A second later he was straddling the gorgeous, toned figure of his surprised boyfriend. “I’ll tell you about work later,” Adam purred as he began to swivel his hips, “but right now I need to kiss you in the worst way.”

With a gasp, Kris’ eyes fluttered closed and his lips parted in invitation. “Adam…”

*He can’t resist.* “That’s right, baby,” Adam murmured while continuing to grind their cocks together. “You want me,” he whispered the instant before his tongue had sex with Kris’ panting, moaning mouth. His snapping hips and fucking lips were ruthless, passionately devastating the man beneath him with ever increasing speed. Snap-snap-snap-snap. Hands scrabbled over his back and a loud
whine began to sound from low in Kris’ throat. Now. Adam jumped up and backed away just out of reach, leaving Kris teetering on the edge of coming undone completely.

“Fuck! Fuck, get back here!” Kris yelled. He started to rub his dick.

“No touching.” Adam commanded, trying to battle his own desire to finish the job. He knew that if Kris wasn’t injured that they’d be wrestling by now. “I swear I’ll make it worth your while,” he promised with a rather evil grin.

Kris gritted his teeth, took a huge, shuddering breath and stopped trying to get off. “If this is payback for this morning, you’re way overcompensating,” he growled.

“I know, but it’s gonna be really, really hot. Now sit there and be a good boy while I play with Fifi.”

“Oh my god,” groaned Kris, “you’re so mean!”

Adam winked at him. “Fifi! Come on girl!” The pup ran in from goodness knows where and yipped once. Ignoring his own case of blue balls and Kris’ huffs, Adam grabbed a knotted rope toy and began playing tug of war with Fifi. She sank her little teeth into one end and pulled as hard as she could, jerking and shaking her head like she was tearing up a squirrel. “Oooh, you’re so vicious! Yes you are, grrrr!” Fifi growled, too, only it was so adorable that Adam laughed. “Feisty girl!” He started lifting his end into the air, but she wouldn’t let go and her feet eventually left the ground as she continued to snarl with all the ferociousness of an angry Easter bunny. After tug of war he played fetch with her and chased her around the apartment when she wouldn’t give the toy back. Every once in a while he’d catch Kris’ pouting face, but there was smile in those brown eyes, too.

Thirty minutes later, Fifi was finally worn out. Adam threw her hamburger across the room one last time and she ambled over to it, her head wobbling a little. One squeak of the toy and she collapsed in a miniature heap of puppy cuteness. Kris and Adam giggled.

“So cute,” said Kris as Adam scooped her up and went into the utility room to lay her down.

“Now, time for you to shuffle off to the bedroom,” Adam said when he returned to the living room. “I keep my promises,” he smirked, “and I’ll be right there.”

Kris narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “What are you up to?”

“You’ll see. Now get!”

“Mmm, bossy, I like it.”

Adam waited until Kris followed orders and then made his way to the kitchen where he spotted a pan and a spatula in the dish drainer. He probably cooked grilled cheese. Well at least he used the right spatula this time. The thought stopped him in his tracks. Do I nag him? Ever since their little spat on Friday, Adam had been wondering about this. He knew he tended to be controlling and that couldn’t be easy to live with. But he’d tell me, wouldn’t he? Frowning a little, Adam got out a large plastic bowl and opened the freezer. Guess we should have a talk about that. When the container was almost overflowing with ice cubes, he left for the bedroom, putting everything else out of his mind except the sexy game about to take place.

“Kris moaned as Adam put the bowl on the bedside table. He was naked now and his cock obviously liked the idea of ice because it twitched several times.
Adam licked his lips. He was dying to feel the weight of that dick heavy on his tongue, but he had to be patient. “Don’t move. Don’t touch,” he told Kris, who curled his fingers into the blankets and nodded without removing his eyes from the bowl. Adam took off his boots and socks, placed them off to the side and palmed himself a few times, just to get Kris’ attention. It worked.

“Watch.” Standing up against the side of the bed, Adam selected a single ice cube and put it to his hot lips. It dripped as he sucked and licked it, dribbled down his chin and fell to the hollow of his throat.

Kris swallowed, his eyes already bugging out. He opened his mouth but only a hoarse groan came out.

“Mmmm, so good,” Adam breathed. He arched his head back and began to paint his long neck with languid, cool strokes, up and down, leaving the beautiful skin shining and wet. His other hand crept to his fly.

“Want.”

Adam ignored his lover’s trembling plea. With deft fingers, he popped his jeans open and lowered the zipper tooth by tooth. He knew what he was doing to Kris and it turned him on so much that he wanted to attack that stunning body and pound it in to the fucking mattress.

Kris’ eyes were glazed over with lust and his dick had a life of its own, leaping and straining as if it could make Adam cease the torture and devour it in one swallow.

The ice disappeared at the perfect time. Adam left his pants open in teasing temptation and slowly unbuttoned his shirt. “You want my mouth, sucking you down.”

“Yessss.”

One button. “You want my cock, fucking your ass.”

“Adam…”

Two buttons, then three and four. “You want me.” His shirt was open, falling gracefully from broad shoulders and helped to the floor by fingers that slowly reached for the ice again when garment was finally gone. Warm skin met cold as Adam slid another cube around his navel, then up to one nipple. “Kriss,” he hissed with a shudder.

A broken gasp and the grinding of teeth were loud in the room.

Adam urged the aroused nub into an erection of textured skin with every pass of the melting ice. When it was almost numb he moved on to his other nipple. “You want me,” he moaned, getting lost in his own sexual prowess as trickles of water streamed down his freckled chest. He had to touch himself. Black nails led the way, slipping beneath his briefs to curl around his aching cock. “Oh god…ohhhh.”

Kris was whimpering now but Adam didn’t stop. It felt so fucking good - the cold on his skin and the heat coiling in his belly. He pulled and stroked, faster and faster.

“Adam!” It was a cry of release, and it snapped Adam out of his trance.
“You came.”

“Fucking…shit! Can you blame me?” Kris puffed, wiping his cum-covered hand across his stomach. “You’re so goddamn sexy…jesus!”

“Mmmm, now you’re really gonna pay.” In a flash Adam shed the rest of his clothes and hovered over Kris on the bed with the bowl of ice nearby. “Oh yes you will.” He took a chilly square into his hand and held it over Kris’ spent length, squeezing tightly until a few drops seeped in between his fingers and landed on target. He chuckled wickedly at Kris’ sharp yell. *Time for the real fun.* “You know,” Adam said as he started shaking more ice water over his lover’s body, “if your skin gets cold enough then you can’t feel as much pain, which means…I’ll have to bite harder.”

“You’re going to be the death of me.”

As much as he wanted to play with all of Kris’ body Adam decided, based on what he’d just done to himself, to be very specific with his attention. “One thing before I get started, angel…if you feel the need to spank me, you can…lightly and only once.” *Just to see what it’s like.*

Kris accused him of being the devil disguised as the hottest man ever to walk the earth.

Careful not to jostle Kris’ cast, Adam pinned him to the bed, bent down and went to work. Ice…suck…bite…ice…suck…bite. Kris’ nipples were flaming red after only a minute and Adam got his spank. It didn’t hurt or even sting. It was startling, an unexpected slap that made his breath catch, his mouth suckle harder and his tongue lick faster around the hardened peak between his lips.

“Adam…oh fuck…oh fuck! I can’t…it’s too much…I need you…shit!”

But Adam didn’t give in to the whole body ache that was clamoring for him to fuck the living daylights out of Kris, not yet. Instead he released Kris’ nipple with a soft pop and sat back, surveying the dark hickeys around each nub. “Gorgeous.” There was still a lot of ice left and Adam was going to use it. With eyes glimmering mischievously, he crawled up until he was straddling Kris’ shoulders.

“No…no please…please…I’m begging, I need you!” Kris wailed when he saw what Adam was about to do.

Drip. “Whoo! That’s cold!”

“Oh GOD, you are evil!”

Another bead of water hit the head of Adam’s engorged cock. “You want this? Wanna make it all warm for me?” he taunted as he squeezed his fist over his dick again.

“Can I spank you again? You so fucking deserve to be spanked right fucking now!”

Adam laughed and shivered, rose up to his knees and made another drip slide down his dick to his balls. “Open wide.”

Poor Kris couldn’t take it anymore. He gripped Adam’s ass and feasted on cock, stuffing his face with it until he gagged.

Adam decided that ice was his first ever kink. As Kris sucked him, Adam plucked cube after cube from the bowl and rubbed them all over his own body, through his hair and even teased his hole with
one. The contrast of hot and cold was sublimely erotic and he couldn’t get enough. He came so hard down Kris’ throat that it made him dizzy, and the shouts that left his lips were thick with freedom and open abandon. His dick pumped itself empty as he thrust through the aftershocks and wheezed out his relief with fingers buried deep into the pillow under Kris’ head.

Kris voice was ruined, but somehow he made it clear that as soon as Adam was ready again, he owed him a fuck.

It only took five minutes before Adam had Kris on his stomach taking the beating of his life, fucked into oblivion by a raging beast who froze him, bit him and spanked him until he cried out in bliss. Adam came a second later with an ice cube deep inside his own ass.

***

After dinner that night, Adam’s brother called him to check in. Neil was absolutely stunned to hear that Adam was employed at a public store and kept going on and on about how proud he was. After the fifth time of hearing it, Adam had to tell him to knock it off even though he was kind of basking in the praise.

“So you have to make plans to come back here in May.”

“Oh? What’s going on?” asked Neil.

“Kris is graduating college and his parents and brother are flying in. It’s the perfect time for our families to get together. Mom and dad are hosting.”

“Count on it, bro. I’m hot shit over here, so they’ll let me do pretty much whatever the hell I want.”

“Sure you are.”

“Shut up, Blockhead.”

“Same to you, Lucy.”

They hung up a few minutes later and Adam relaxed back into cuddling with Kris on the couch. Kris wanted to hear about his day at work and Adam finally felt ready to talk about it. He spoke for nearly fifteen minutes, explaining everything that had happened right down to the little girl saving him from a freak out.

“Alex sounds like an incredible guy,” said Kris as he pet Fifi, who was curled up on his lap.

“He is. I mean he’s really quiet, but I like that. Tommy’s nice, too, but I have to work so much harder at socializing when I’m around him. It’s exhausting.”

They sat in silence for a while, just enjoying the peace and quiet. “So I called around to a few places today,” said Kris when Fifi left his lap to investigate a squirrel on the other side of the sliding glass door.

“You did? You mean venues?” He really needs to be performing.
“Mhmm. I didn’t get any bites, but I’m not giving up.”

“Good. You’re talented, Kris. When people hear you, they’re gonna wish you’d been playing there for years.”

Kris chortled. “Well I don’t know about that, but thanks for the encouragement. I can’t wait to hear about my demo. Did you send yours in yet?”

“I plan to drop it in the mail tomorrow morning.” Adam kissed the top of his boyfriend’s head and smiled. “Things are going to work out for us, angel, I can feel it.”

Chapter 55

As the last full week of March drew to a close the weather outside was more often in the seventies, which was a perfect temperature for Fifi and she wanted to be outside more and more often to chase her squirrels and dig around in the yard. Kris was starting to wish that they had a doggie door so he didn’t have to keep getting up and down to let her in and out all the time. And then there was the special sunscreen he had to apply to her sensitive skin so it wouldn’t burn in the blazing Los Angeles sun. Add to that Fifi’s velcro tendencies when she was indoors, and Kris was fast discovering that it was hard to concentrate on creating art with her around. True, he could go into the studio or the bedroom and close the door, but the couch was the most comfortable and easiest place to rest his leg while drawing or playing his guitar. He’d been resting a lot over the past two days.

His doctor had scolded him on Wednesday for doing too much and attempting to put weight on his injured leg too early – Kris really hated crutches. Ever since his bout with drinking the previous week, he’d gone a little overboard trying to compensate by doing laundry, making the bed (not as well as Adam did), cleaning up the kitchen and attempting all sorts of domestic things that were incredibly difficult to perform while using crutches or balancing on one foot. After getting lectured, he’d promised not to overtax himself again.

Unfortunately, Adam had heard every word of the doctor’s orders and as soon as they got home, he’d decided that pretty much any activity, including sex, would be too taxing for Kris. Kris agreed to tone down the domestic stuff, but he’d been unable to convince Adam that oral sex at the very least wouldn’t bother his leg. They’d had a big ugly fight about it on Wednesday night with Adam reminding him the doctor said no strenuous activity. “How is it strenuous if I’m laying down and you’re blowing me!” Kris had yelled. But that man was as stubborn as a mule when he wanted to be, and apparently “orgasms are overtaxing.” It was really hard to storm off on crutches, but Kris had done his best to do so while shouting, “you can’t stop me from jerking off when you’re at work!” He wasn’t in the habit of raising his voice like that, but Adam was being irrationally overprotective.

So where did all that put him by the time Friday afternoon rolled around? Frustrated by Fifi, irritated at being mothered, worried that he hadn’t received any callbacks from potential employers yet, and really fucking horny for his boyfriend. What he needed was a long workout at the gym and a good fuck, and since neither of those were an option at the moment, Kris was sorely tempted to raid the kitchen for liquor. There wasn’t any beer, but Adam always made sure they had some decent wine. You promised not to, and he’s going to be home in an hour. That would be a really shitty way to greet him after the hard week he’s had.
Adam was being socially challenged for sure, and Kris never knew if he’d return from Sew Your Soul full of confidence or dead on his feet or angry with himself. So far Kris had seen all three. He had every intention of confronting Adam soon about his controlling behavior, because damn it Kris had needs too. *Maybe I should wait though.* Adam would need all his energy to recover from the day and prepare for his performance at the club tonight. Sunday was out, too since it was their six month anniversary. *Maybe tomorrow morning before Fifi’s class? But that’s still kind of hard for him, maybe I shouldn’t….oh for god’s sake! Now who’s the one being overprotective? He’s a big boy and this needs to be sorted out before it gets worse.*

Fifi was at the sliding door again, pawing on the glass to be let in. Kris heaved a sigh, put down his guitar and grabbed his crutches. After letting the puppy inside and managing not to fall over from her bouncing around him, he went to get the mail. The notice from school about graduation deadlines made him smile at first, but then he remembered that Spring Break was over and he’d have to go back to class on Monday evening. *Ugh. Thank god they have elevators in that building though.*

The next piece of mail was a surprise, a letter from his parents, quite unusual since they always just talked on the phone. Kris made his way back to the couch and plopped down, trying not to throw the stupid crutches across the room like he really, really wanted to. Fifi jumped up next to him and settled herself next to his good leg. “Oh my god!” Kris exclaimed out loud after unfolding the note inside. “Holy…a thousand dollars!?"

*Hey honey,*

*We know that you aren’t able to work right now, so hopefully this will help a little with rent and other necessities. Your father and I are very glad that Adam seems to be taking such good care of you. Please give him our love. Also, be sure to give him your father’s brand new mail order catalogue!*

Kris looked in the envelope again and pulled out a simple tri-fold brochure, complete with color photos and a price listing. “Wow, pop!” A bright smile lit up Kris’ face at the thought of his dad making a business out of something he loved to do so much. He went back to the letter.

*Since it was Adam’s idea, I’m sure he’ll be thrilled. I know we are! This might be really good for our family if everything works out. Fingers crossed! We can’t wait to see you in May, honey. We’re all really proud of you.*

*Hugs and kisses,*

*Mom*

“This is so cool!” Fifi looked up at him and Kris was sure she was smiling, if that were possible. “Isn’t this awesome, girl?” he chirped as if she could understand him, holding out the glossy brochure, which she sniffed and licked. Kris’ family had been struggling financially for a while now. Even though his dad made a stable salary as a carpenter and his mom’s job in customer service paid decently, his family was in debt. The primary cause of this was medical bills. His mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer several years ago and although she was a survivor, the medical expenses were staggering. The only reason he’d been able to attend school in California was through a number of scholarships and grants. *God I hope this works out for them. What the hell are they doing sending me a thousand dollars?*

Kris called his mother immediately and began to chide her about the check.
“Honey, don’t worry! It’s the money from a few pieces that your dad sold so it’s fine.”

“It’s not fine, ma! You could use that to pay bills! Adam can help out until I’m working again, you don’t need to--”

“Kristopher, stop it now. We’re allowed to help our son however we see fit. You’re not the parent here and it’s not your job to fix everything, remember?”

Kris felt like he’d just run into a perfectly clear glass door at full speed and landed on his ass. *Well that was unexpected!* He’d never heard his mother utter such words and once he got over the shock, a huge sense of relief flooded his veins. *Finally! We’re both on the same page. Good thing she reminded me, too.* “That’s right, it’s not. Wow, that’s just…” He didn’t know what else to say except “thanks for the check, ma.”

“You’re welcome, dear. Now, tell me how things are going with you.”

As Kris spoke about his physical recovery, living with Adam and his attempts to find performing work, a series of tight little knots that he didn’t remember tying started to come undone in his heart. By the end of the conversation, there were still a good number of them bound up because it wasn’t easy to silence the messages saying it was his responsibility to make everything better, but he’d made a damn good start. Adam walked in the door just as he said “I love you, too,” and hung up the phone.

He looked completely beat and Kris wished that he didn’t have to perform that night. “Tough day?”

Adam sighed, dropping his wallet and keys on the table. “You could say that.” When his boots were off he sat on the couch, picked up a very excited Fifi and lay down with his head in Kris’ lap. “Hey girl,” he said in a weary tone when the pup started licking his face. After a few minutes of cuddling her while Kris stroked his hair, Adam put Fifi on the ground and looked up. “Everything with Alex is so easy, but the public thing and Tommy…it’s so fucking hard. I keep getting jittery every time a guy walks in and they look at me weird because my smile is fake and today I messed up one of the prices but Tommy helped me out and, and…how’s your leg? Did you--”

“Shhh, slow down, baby,” said Kris soothingly, “just relax…breathe…” He continued to card his fingers through the thick black hair and smiled down at Adam. “Relax.”

But Adam would not be deterred. “What about your leg? Has it been hurting you?”

Kris rolled his eyes and bent down to kiss his ridiculous boyfriend, hoping that would shut him up. “I’m fine,” he murmured right before pressing their lips together. Adam hummed a little as Kris licked the seam of his lips and essentially forced entry into that hot mouth. *I am so damn horny right now.* His right hand immediately sought out Adam’s crotch and he grinned when Adam moaned and arched up into his palm. *Yesss.*

“Mmph…wait no.” Adam pushed on Kris’ shoulders, breaking the kiss despite Kris’ growling whine at being denied for what felt like millionth time since Wednesday.

“Adam, come on, please…I’m dying here,” he begged and started massaging Adam’s dick through his jeans. “I’m so hot for you right now. Let me, just let me touch you and--”

“No way, it’s too…oh god…Kris…” Adam bucked his hips, and just when Kris thought he’d won,
that dastardly man rolled away and stood up.

“Alright, that’s it.” *I don’t care if he has to work tonight, I can’t take this anymore!* “This is crazy! I am not going to hurt my leg by having an orgasm! I swear to god if I have to get my doctor to prescribe me a fuck then I will!” he said hotly to Adam, who was running his hands through his hair. Kris took a deep breath to steady his voice. “Listen, sit down so we can talk about this, okay? I don’t want to fight again. Will you just tell me what this is really all about? Come here.”

Adam’s dark eyebrows were knitted together in obvious worry, but he did as Kris asked and settled onto the couch with his knees drawn up and his arms wrapped around them. He looked scared. “I have to protect you. Kris, I can’t…” Adam stopped and shook his head before continuing. “Last weekend when we drove to Fifi’s class and then Wednesday to your doctor’s office, I felt so…I don’t know. And you were doing so much this week. I mean I don’t want you to sit around and do nothing all day, but what if you hurt yourself again, what if your leg doesn’t heal right, or what if I drive you somewhere and…” He swallowed and dropped his forehead to his knees. “I can’t lose you,” he mumbled.

*So that’s it. He feels powerless.* “Adam, look at me, baby.” Kris waited until Adam’s glassy eyes were staring at him. “I know how you feel. I really do, but we have to move on from this otherwise it’ll drive both of us crazy.” He reached out to touch his lover’s sad face. “And I know you know sex isn’t going to hurt me.”

Adam looked down at his feet and nodded. “Please let me do something for you though, anything. I need to, angel.”

“You already do plenty for me. You cook and clean and--”

“No, I mean something I wouldn’t normally do, something to help you recover. Please,” he said in a desperate voice that made Kris’ heart hurt something awful.

*Maybe he’ll ease up if I can find something specific.* He thought for a minute until an idea suddenly came to him. “How about this. When it’s time for me to take my cast off and ice my leg or let it breathe, you can do that for me.” Kris did a little happy dance inside when he saw Adam’s face light up at the suggestion.

“You’ll let me do that?”

“Of course I will, but only if you promise never to withhold sex again,” he chuckled. “That’s just cruel, baby.”

“I’m sorry, really, I just felt so…”

“Helpless?”

“Yeah.”

The raw vulnerability in those eyes was a precious thing, Kris knew that, and when he leaned over to kiss Adam’s slightly trembling mouth, he hoped that his intent to cherish and cuddle it could be felt in the way he brushed their lips together gently, tenderly. *So soft.* Two leaves fluttering against each other in a gentle breeze would make more noise than the loving presses of their mouths.

A few minutes of this sweetness passed before Adam pulled back wearing a hesitant expression. “Do
I nag you?"

*Good, now I’m not the one to bring it up.* “No you don’t, but you do like to be in control and sometimes that’s hard for me. I don’t like it when you organize my stuff without asking or get upset if I put the wooden spoons back in the wrong place. Plus I miss some of the things I’m used to eating, I like my piano bench pulled out and there’s no sense in squeezing my toothpaste to the top of the tube because I’ll just mess it up again.” *Wow, holding back much?*

Adam looked stunned by Kris’ little monologue. “W-why haven’t you been telling me all this?”

*Because I’m still a people pleaser at heart, damn it!* Kris rubbed his forehead, feeling disappointed in himself for not saying anything sooner. “It’s still hard,” he admitted. So often when he’d thought about bringing something up, that old fear of conflict would kick in and attempt to strangle him like a noose, threatening to choke his pretty little neck if he spoke his mind.

“I know but…I can’t do anything about it if you don’t tell me. Sure I might get annoyed or pissy, but Kris, you have every right to say what you need or what bothers you. God knows I do.”

That’s for sure.

“And you’ve done if before. You still won’t let me organize your drawers,” he smirked. His confidence appeared to be returning.

“You tried to fold my underwear!” Kris exclaimed with a laugh. “Who folds underwear anyway?”

“I do and it saves me a lot of space, but that’s not the point.”

The couple continued to talk for another ten minutes and agreed that Kris would try to express his needs and preferences more while Adam would do his best to respect them. All throughout their conversation, however, Kris kept glancing at Adam’s beautiful lips and his tongue when it poked out to swipe at that rebellious freckle. *He won’t deny me again.* Kris’ body began to tingle with the suppressed need that was hungrily checking out every aspect that made Adam so delicious, which was pretty much all of him.

Adam stopped speaking when their eyes locked and there was no way he could miss the absolute want painted all over Kris’ face with large, broad strokes. A little gasp of realization was all it took for Kris to push himself in between Adam’s knees and groan, “make love to me, please…I need you so bad.”

“Absolutely, but I’m carrying you to the bedroom.”

“You’ve got my permission to carry me for that reason any time you want, whether my leg is broken or not.”

“Awesome.”

The lovers fell into bed together and after only fifteen glorious minutes, Kris felt all of his pent up sexual frustration leave his body with a cry of release that pierced the air. Adam’s sobbing shout was even louder.

When at last they could breathe again, Adam scooped Kris up into his arms and held him tightly. “I’m such an idiot. I don’t know how I lasted almost three days without loving you like this.”
Kris giggled as he snuggled the warmth and familiarity, nuzzling his face and nose into his spot, right where Adam’s neck and shoulder met. “I was kinda wondering that myself.”

“Mmm, it was very difficult,” Adam chuckled as he ran his fingers up and down Kris’ spine. “Damn, I really wish I didn’t have to work,” he sighed. “I’m tempted to call out sick just so we can cuddle all night, but I don’t want to disappoint my--” His words came to an abrupt halt and his muscles tensed. So odd. He should be used to having people admire him. Adam was gaining quite the fan base at his new club, people who loved his singing and were now repeatedly asking him when he’d have an album out for sale. “Your fans. You know you had those at the other club, too.”

“Yeah, but these ones make me nervous. They’re so intense and they try to get in my space after the show. People used to stay away from me…they knew better. I feel like I’ve lost my shield somehow.”

Kris couldn’t think of anything helpful to say. Obviously Adam didn’t want to go back to keeping the world at a distance, but some personal boundaries were important, too. “Sounds like something Sheila would know about.” I can’t fix him. I can’t fix anyone but myself.

“Mmm. Well I’m just gonna focus on the performance and come home as quick as I can. I’m so tired.”

“You could take a little nap. I can make us dinner, you know.”

“Let me guess. Grilled cheese sandwiches? Ow! Hey, no pinching,” Adam giggled.

***

On Saturday morning, Adam suggested that they visit his parents to show them Neil’s brochure. He told Kris he was certain that they would want to order something, probably at least one of those gorgeous rocking chairs. Kris readily agreed, thinking that it would also give him a chance to properly thank them for the check and gifts he’d received.

When they arrived at the Lambert’s, Leila already had lunch prepared for them since they couldn’t stay long because of Fifi’s class. They spent an enjoyable hour together, Kris blushing to his roots on behalf of his father when everyone started gushing over the brochure. He got even redder when Leila winked at his breakaway pants. No wonder Adam is such a tease. I bet she drives Eber crazy. Indeed, Adam’s parents were quite affectionate and it was obvious that they loved each other very much.

At one o’clock the couple headed out amidst congratulations on their six-month anniversary. It had taken them the better part of an evening to figure out how to celebrate the occasion, and Kris was eager to get through the rest of Saturday so they could get to tomorrow already.

Fifi’s class went off with barely a hitch other than the fact that the participants were slowly loosing tooth enamel due to all the grinding over Annie’s inhumanly high and chipper voice. “We could totally drop out,” whispered Kris at one point. “Fifi is too advanced for this class now anyway. She’s making the other dogs look bad and it’s really not fair to them.” Adam had snorted loudly at that,
earning him an ear-shattering laugh from their instructor.

All that evening, all throughout Adam’s performance, and even in his dreams, Kris was thinking about Sunday. Part of what they were planning would be romantic and beautiful, but the other part… hot. Kris’ eyes snapped open at the crack of dawn and he watched his lover sleep for nearly two hours before finally waking him up with a long kiss. “Happy anniversary, baby.”

“Mmmm.” Adam yawned and stretched. “Happy anniversary, angel. How about some more of that kissing.”

“I should really say no after you denied me for days, but since it’s our—mmph!” The rest of his teasing was abruptly cut off by a ruthless attack of freckled lips.

At eleven o’clock Fifi was in her room, all the blinds were closed and every light in the kitchen and living room had been turned on. Adam lay on the couch with his head propped up on the armrest. Kris had spent several minutes positioning him, first telling him to bend his right leg so that his foot was flat on the cushion, and then to rest his right arm on that knee, straight with palm down so that those long fingers would dangle from his bent wrist. Adam’s left leg should be straight and left arm draped across his stomach. “Now look at me and don’t move,” Kris had said when he was finished directing his subject.

Thirty minutes passed after that with Kris examining Adam’s body as he sketched it. It was odd, this unexpected talent that had seemingly popped up out of nowhere. Drawing was very soothing for Kris, and he’d been practicing his newfound skills a lot over the last two weeks. He sketched everything in sight and also found himself creating images to accompany songs he’d written. Yesterday on their way home from Fifi’s class, he’d thought how cool it would be if he could illustrate an album cover some day.

It took Kris about two seconds to convince his boyfriend to model for him when they were discussing their anniversary plans. Adam still had moments of self-consciousness about his body, and Kris suspected that being drawn made him feel beautiful.

“Stop moving.”

“But my nose itches!”

Kris snorted and halted the pencil on the paper right where he’d been working on his lover’s beautiful cheekbone. “Go ahead then.” He watched as Adam bent his right arm and turned it to scratch his nose, then extended it back with his palm faced up instead of down. “No, flip your hand over, so it’s—”

“Oops, I forgot. Like this?” Adam asked.

“Yeah, that’s perfect…beautiful, just…gorgeous.” The last word was more of a sigh as Kris absorbed the stunning, nude form of his lover stretched out on the couch, posed like some kind of god on a roman temple wearing an angel bracelet. Although half of Kris’ brain was concentrating diligently on the task before him, the other half kept telling him to ditch the sketchpad so he could lay his hands all over that naked skin and then lick it. The things I’m going to do to him…mmmm. Even if nature hadn’t blessed him quite as much it had Adam, surely breakaway pants weren’t made to handle the strain of Kris’ growing arousal; he expected to hear a few snaps popping any minute.

Adam’s dick twitched and he smirked at Kris. “Now that’s entirely your fault. I can’t help it if certain
parts move when you stare at me like that.”

“Like what? Like I want to lick you from head to toe and make you come in my mouth?”

Twitch, twitch. “Yeah, like that, you badass tease,” said Adam, his smirk deepening to a little growl. “Don’t expect me to stay on this couch much longer.”

Kris tried to pull himself together, because he really did want to finish Adam’s face at least. “Okay… I can do more some other time, just let me get this one part.” Don’t think about spanking him or fucking him so hard that… focus!

“You’ve got about five minutes before that ass is mine.”

“Oh yeah? I thought we agreed that your ass would be mine today,” Kris teased, unable to fight the growing desire to pound into Adam like a maniac. He’d only done it in his dreams before, but soon it would be a reality and to say that Kris was keen was a fucking understatement.

Adam groaned and squeezed his eyes shut. “I don’t care whose ass is whose. You’ve got five fucking minutes. Five.”

“You’re not even looking at a clock, how will you--”

“I’m counting. I already started in fact.”

Even though the heat between them was searing enough to melt a glacier, they both giggled a bit before Kris continued to define the contours of Adam’s face. He didn’t look at the large, erect cock pulsing against alabaster skin, tried not to notice the sensual curve of Adam’s ass pressing into the couch; no, instead Kris found himself caught up in the lashes fanned across a pale meadow of freckles and the way his lover’s mouth seemed to curl up just a fraction with every breath.

At one point he was so entranced by the small area just below Adam’s full bottom lip that he didn’t realize his subject was studying him intently until the lip stretched into a smile. Kris’ eyes flicked up and he saw two seas of blue glimmering at him with something that most people only dream of having directed at them… adoration. As he let it wash over his heart, Kris felt special, unique and proud of who he was. I’m not boring. I’m not a disposable doormat. How many people could handle this kind of relationship? I deserve to be adored, don’t I?

“I love you too, Adam.”

“I know.”

Kris suddenly wished he were close enough to reach out and stroke that soft mouth, but his chair was a good five feet from the couch. He stood up, hopped on his left leg until he reached the coffee table and then sat down on it across from Adam. “Did you lose count?”

“Mhmm. Got lost in the pretty,” Adam answered, his eyes still shining with love.

Kris touched Adam’s warm lips with the first two fingers of his left hand. “Me too.” The calloused pads of his fingertips made their way down Adam’s jaw and neck, across his broad chest and over the freckled forearm that rested on his stomach. A little sigh sounded and then Adam’s eyelids drooped and slid closed as Kris continued to caress his body with feather light touches. The raging fire of lust was still present but slightly muted at the moment. Kris could feel it throbbing beneath the
blanket of mutual appreciation that had settled over them, just like the pumping of Adam’s excited heart under all that smooth skin.

Down, down went Kris’ hand, skimming its way to a left bare foot with toes curling in and out. Beautiful, sexy. He’d never been so entranced by the male form as he was in that moment. His gaze followed every stroke of his own fingers and took in the man that he hoped to wake up to for the rest of his life.

Adam shuddered and pressed his right knee into the back of the couch, exposing himself even more. A whispered “ohhh” fell out of his mouth when Kris ran a thumbnail up his inner thigh. “Angel,” he moaned, “you make me feel…”

“Gorgeous? Breathtaking? Sexy?”

“Yesss.”

“Good,” Kris murmured. That quivering thigh belonged to him as did the tightening balls anticipating his touch. Mine to feel, mine to taste. “You’re all of those things and more…and you’re mine,” he stated as he ghosted his fingers over Adam’s engorged member, teasing and tickling the velvet skin and leaking slit.

Adam groaned and nodded, drawing up his left leg so that both legs were bent and wide, wide open…inviting. Kris’ latest erotic dream flashed in his mind at that sight and he licked his lips, wanting to make it happen now even though they’d planned that for later on. He leaned over, flickered his tongue at a line of dribbling pre-cum and sat back up. Adam gasped. “Want to fuck you,” Kris whispered into the shell of his ear.

“Kris …yes…” Adam didn’t even wait for them to move to the bedroom. He hooked his arms under his knees and pulled his legs back, breathing hard. His pink star clenched, beckoned. “Lick me, suck me…fuck me…do it…right now,” he panted.

Desire was burning Kris up like a spark to the driest bed of leaves and he wanted so badly to take his time with Adam, to slowly make him come apart before fucking him senseless, but goddamn, the man was practically begging for it. Fuck it.

The breakaway pants served their purpose and Kris was naked in seconds. Although neither had planned it this way, the couch was actually perfect because Kris could easily rest his shin and foot on a stack of pillows while pinning Adam beneath him.

“Talk to me dirty. Let me hear that filthy mouth of yours,” Adam moaned as Kris bent him in half.

Just hearing those words was enough make Kris’ head spin. “Dirty talk? You mean like how hard I’m gonna suck your wet, thick dick?”

“Yes, yes…more, oh fuck!” Adam bucked into Kris’ watering mouth and put his nails to good use when Kris popped off and began sucking and licking his balls. Kris couldn’t decide which was tastier and kept going back and forth between the two sensitive organs until Adam had scratched deep marks into his back. “God! Adam!” He dropped his head, his tongue leading the way to lap feverishly between Adam’s cheeks with short, quick strokes as his fingertips dug into flesh. The musky flavor under his slippery tongue and the sharp pain of nails raking his skin, the sexy, filthy noises tumbling from Adam’s mouth…it was all driving Kris to the brink of lust faster than a blow job.

He spat on his hand. “No lube,” he grunted.
“Kris, goddamnit! I don’t fucking care! Get your fucking cock in me right fucking now!”

It was exactly like his dream and Kris was beside himself at this point. He wasn’t sure how long he’d last once he was in because his dick wanted to come just from the way Adam’s hips kept rocking in anticipation. After licking his palm several times to make sure he’d be slick enough, Kris finally lined up. He tried to hesitate, to take it slow, but Adam grabbed him and pulled him in right to the fucking hilt.

“Shit!” he yelled as he fell forward, nearly knocking their heads together. “You nasty, fucking hot man,” he growled before licking Adam’s open, panting mouth. Their kisses were wet and sloppy and the tightness gripping Kris’ cock when he drew out and slammed back in sent him into overdrive. There was no way he could do anything but pound.

“Harder…harder…come on, baby, I know you can…fuck, that’s it, oh god right there!” cried Adam.

Long legs arms and wrapped around Kris’ body and crushed him into thrusting even faster, his hips snapping a mile a minute and sweat beading on his temples. He grunted like an animal and gave Adam’s taut thigh a light slap. *Oh god that was sexy! Ask for more…please let me do it again!*

“Again! Spank me…harder this time!”

_Fucking fuck! Don’t come, don’t…hold on…just a little longer…_ Kris raised his hand and brought it down again.

“Angel! Take me, come inside of me…I want…”

That did it. Kris went wild. He pushed Adam’s knees back so far that they touched couch cushion and sped up, driving…fucking…sweating…every muscle quivering on the edge as he grasped Adam’s cock and pumped it rapidly. And then his brain short circuited as he witnessed one of the sexiest scenes ever to grace this undeserving world.

Adam’s mouth formed into a silent ‘o’ and for a split second he froze, wide eyed, before snapping his head against the sofa, his teeth gritted and neck veins pulsing. Cum bathed his stomach in thick ropes and he squeezed all the air of out Kris’ body with an intense shudder.

It didn’t even take Kris half a thrust. He’d made Adam look that way, feel that way and his body screamed in triumph and possession. An explosion of pleasure ripped through him, pushing goose bumps up to the surface of his skin as his seed filled the whimpering man still shivering through the aftershocks.

There was no way he should be able to breathe, but somehow he managed it, they both did. Tangled and sweaty and slick with cum they breathed, Kris’ mouth to Adam’s shoulder. It took a long, long time for them to move, and when they finally did, it was only to whisper I love yous and kiss like they had all the time in the world.

***

Kris allowed Adam to play nurse for the rest of the day, to shower him and ice his leg. Adam even
pulled the car up closer to their walkway when they were ready to leave the apartment for the frame shop. Their two halves of the tie had been carefully hand washed, dried and rolled up neatly in a cloth bag.

After a twenty minute drive, both of the men were walking awkwardly across the store parking lot, Kris because he was on crutches and Adam…he was a bit sore, but smiling widely nonetheless. “You’re an animal,” he’d murmured to Kris while soaping him in the shower that afternoon.

“I don’t know, Adam. None of these look nice enough,” said Kris with a black frame in his hand.

“I know what you mean. Let’s go to the service counter and see if they have any ideas.”

“Good plan.”

They shuffled to the back of the store and rang the little bell on the counter. Adam started thumbing through an album of custom frame jobs. “Something like this would be nice, don’t you think?” He pointed to a display frame, the kind that one would mount a three-dimensional object in like a jersey or a bouquet of dried flowers.

“I like that. We could arrange the two halves however we want and they wouldn’t get squished,” Kris smiled, feeling his heart expand at the thought of preserving the item that had brought them together.

“Can I help you?” said an older gentleman as he walked around and stood at the counter.

The couple explained what they wanted to do, and after almost a half an hour of trying to decide how to arrange the two pieces in the frame the man had suggested, they were satisfied. “You’ll have to leave everything here so I can mount it properly. I’ll sew it into the backing, just a few tiny stitches here and there, and I should be done with it by Tuesday at the latest.”

Adam and Kris frowned, neither of them pleased with the idea of parting with the tie for any amount of time. “Um this tie,” Kris began, scratching at the back of his neck, “well it’s really special to us and…please don’t let anything happen to it.”

“Maybe we shouldn’t do this,” said Adam. “We could just get a frame off the shelf and I can probably figure it out.”

The man smiled at them. “Please be assured that I will take care of your property. I’ll leave it in this cloth bag you brought and it will be safe until I’m ready to frame it.”

His assurances didn’t seem to be helping, however, and when a fretting Adam and a concerned Kris were just on the verge of going with the do-it-yourself method, the employee took pity and agreed to do the project on the spot so they could watch.

“Thank you! We’ll pay for the inconvenience,” offered Adam brightly and Kris nodded in agreement, relieved that they wouldn’t have to worry now.

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“It’s perfect.”
The frame was jet black with a subtle shade of green worked into the grain here and there. Adam and Kris sat on their bed, each holding a glass of wine and looking at the piece of art on the wall that they’d hung up right were the tie halves used to be. Kris was happy with the way it had turned out. At first they’d thought about reuniting the tie where it had torn, but somehow that didn’t feel right to either of them. The wide half belonged to Adam and the thin half to Kris. They were distinct just as their owners were, so in the end the lovers had decided to artfully entwine the two pieces instead. It looked like one object now, but it wasn’t. The new tie was even more beautiful than when it had been originally purchased because Adam and Kris had created it together.

The wine glasses clinked.

“To us.”

Chapter 56

Adam liked taking care of Kris, a whole hell of a lot. Although his pre-trauma youth had been full of friends he’d loved and often counseled, Adam could never have imagined the joy that came with the kind of devotion he felt for Kris. It was true that such deep love also opened the doors to potential hurt, anxiety and the fear of losing something so precious, but mostly Adam felt profoundly blessed and happy at the unexpected gift that had graced his miserable life. He really wanted to believe that he was deserving of such a treasure, and sometimes when he recalled the way Kris gazed at him with open adoration, he could almost convince himself that he did. Almost. He was getting really close to it, but in the mean time the best way he knew how to repay the universe was to cherish what he’d been given.

Adam knew there were times he went overboard, where it would morph into overprotective behavior that blended nicely with his controlling tendencies, particularly if he was scared or worried for some reason. Sheila, of course, could always be counted on to point these things out. He had promised Kris to try to tone down the mother hen routine, but it was far from easy. On Monday night when he’d pulled up to the curb in front of the music department building, he’d had to restrain himself from leaping out of the car and grabbing the backpack from his boyfriend’s shoulders. Luckily there was a shred of reason floating around in his lovesick brain and he’d realized that Kris wouldn’t appreciate being babied in front of peers.

So it went without saying that late afternoon on the next day, Adam found himself having difficulty staying put in the lobby chair while listening to the muffled yelps coming from the room where Kris was getting his regular wax job done. Those rooms were supposed to be soundproof, but that was clearly a misprint on the sign outside. Granted, part of him wanted to giggle at the high-pitched sounds, but mostly he wished that he could magically protect Kris from all pain unless it was asked for. Like biting and spanking and… spanking? He suddenly recalled the unexpected slap on his thigh during Sunday’s ‘art session’ and grinned to himself. I fucking rock. Adam had put the proudest peacock to shame when it’d finally sunk in that he’d taken a hot pounding from Kris and loved every second of it. And a spank. Take that, you assholes! He gave his attackers the middle finger, figuratively speaking, and allowed his smile to turn smug, but another muted cry of “ow! shit!” shifted his smirk into a wince.
Adam was fully aware of the sting Kris must be experiencing right now. His own appointment wasn’t until next week, and the rooms at his salon were definitely soundproof. *Why does he even like this place?* It was clean enough and the woman that greeted them had been friendly, but there was nothing to make it stand out from all the other spas just like it in L.A.

After another ten minutes Kris emerged into the lobby with his waxer, a gorgeous, tall young man with dark hair and sparkling green eyes. *Wasn’t it a woman who called him back?* Adam didn’t like the way the guy was looking at Kris, but the thing that really bothered him was the tinge of pink on Kris’ cheeks and the shy, almost flirtly expression on his face.

“Take care of that leg…hope it heals up soon,” said the man with a frank, open smile that made Adam snarl unconsciously. “See you back next month?”

Kris blushed a deeper scarlet and nodded. “Yep, I’ll make an appointment with Annette. Thanks again, Jeremy.” They shook hands, neither of them noticing Adam rushing over until their grasp was broken apart by his attempt to practically carry Kris out of the salon.

“Adam! What are you doing? Put me down,” he chuckled. “I have to talk to Annette.”

“No. You’re coming with me,” Adam growled, still staring daggers at douchebag wax guy, who was looking mighty confused.

Kris frowned and shoved at the arm around his waist that held him a foot off the ground. “I can’t walk this way with the crutches, will you just--”

Adam put him down but didn’t let go. “Come on, you can call in to make your appointment.”

“Uhh, see you next time, Kris,” said Jeremy with obvious discomfort. He left quickly.

“Adam, stop this and let me take care of my business!”

*There’s no threat here…you know that. Don’t be an ass.* Adam gritted his teeth, fighting the instinct to keep pushing until he got what he wanted. He grudgingly relinquished his grip and stepped back. “Sorry,” he mumbled, sounding exactly like a petulant child who thought he’d been unfairly scolded.

Kris looked at him askance and hobbled over to the front desk, giving Adam the chance to pull himself together if he could manage it. *So what if a cute guy saw him naked, touched him everywhere, put hands on his…fuck. Not okay! And definitely not okay that he was blushing!* Adam didn’t care that there wasn’t a threat, it still pissed him off. He made a valiant attempt to let it slide off his back and was unsuccessful.

Adam could hear the measured calm in Kris’ voice when he asked, “ready to go?” but those brown eyes were full of irritation.

“Yeah.”

When they got into the car, Adam immediately accused his boyfriend of coming to this particular salon because of Jeremy.

“So?” Kris replied with his arms crossed tightly in front of his chest as he stared out the open window. “I’ve been coming here for ages and I’d dare you not to blush if a harmless, cute guy was-...”
“Oh my god! You’re admitting it?” Adam exclaimed, completely taken by surprise by Kris’ blatant confession.

“Why shouldn’t I? I’m sure you’ve done the same th--” His head whipped around in the sudden silence and his eyes went wide. “But no, you wouldn’t have. They’ve all been female, right? Hairdressers, doctors, waxers…all women.”

“Well duh! No need to remind me that I’m not normal!” Adam retorted. This was all wrong, so wrong. He’d had a decent day at work for once and now this crap…the damaged freak shit that was creeping up on him like a barely banished monster just waiting for him to fall asleep.

“What? No! I didn’t mean it that way, I swear,” said Kris in a rush, “Adam, really, you know I wouldn’t--”

“Just…fuck. Give me a second.” Ignoring Kris’ waving hands, he closed his eyes and kicked the monster back under the bed. Okay…okay, calm down, just think. Heart pounding with the anticipation of battle, Adam forced his mind to run through all the cooking analogies, stopping here and there to acknowledge the triumphs he’d experienced. Just this afternoon a man in his twenties left Sew Your Soul not knowing that Adam’s mouth had worn a little less of a grimace than usual. See? I did okay, better than yesterday even. Yeah like it’s real fucking hard to smile at someone, Lambert. You know what? Just shut the fuck up, I’m doing fine and who cares that all my providers are female?

Adam’s thoughts broke off abruptly when a seagull swooped down from the sky and screeched loudly near the car. He snapped open his eyes, turned in the direction of the noise and saw Kris looking at him with concern. In a flash those deep orbs swept everything else away and made Adam sigh with regret at having been such a jerk in the first place. Let’s face it, that guy was hot. Way to overreact…again.

His furrowed brows and harsh mouth softened. “I’m sorry,” he said sincerely, “that was really dumb of me to get upset.”

Kris shook his head, still looking worried. “I wasn’t implying that you weren’t normal.”

“I know that, I know.” He was about to go on apologizing when the seagull returned and landed right on the hood of Kris’ car. Adam moved his hand to the center of the steering wheel intending to beep the horn and scare it off, but the bird walked right up to the windshield and stared at him. He stared back.

“What are you--?”

“Shhhhh,” he said to Kris without moving his head. There hadn’t been any seagulls present the night of his attack ten years ago and Adam had no reason to fear them. Fond memories of chasing the silly things around when he was eight began to bubble up and he remembered his little feet beating a familiar path up and down the shore as the birds squawked and flew away from his laughing voice. A tear gathered in the corner of his right eye as he let the happy times wash through his brain. “I want to go to the beach,” Adam murmured. He heard Kris gasp; the seagull took off in a flash of white and the moment passed.

“Are you serious? The beach?”
“Yeah, I want to go…right now.” The lingering image of a sparkly sandcastle slapped a bright grin on his face and made it glow like a thousand fireflies all huddled together.

“But…but…”

“Not on the sand,” he chuckled, blinking as his eye reabsorbed the unshed tear. “I just want to drive by it, you know, smell it like Sheila said I should do.” I’m ready. The fact that the nervousness churning in his stomach felt more like excitement than fear was a good sign. See? Maybe someday I’ll have a male hairdresser, too.

In the next second Kris’ expression went from shocked to elated. “Awesome!” he chirped. “Let’s go! Oh wait, first I have to do this.” Given their positions in the car, it was remarkable that they managed to keep the kiss going for as long as they did.

When Adam’s back began to ache from twisting it so awkwardly, he separated their lips with a final peck and knew that whatever happened, Kris would help him through it. He held his lover’s chin between his thumb and forefinger and whispered, “I love you.”

They took Route 2 through Beverly Hills towards the Santa Monica Pier where people shopped, sunbathed and picnicked. The touristy seaside was a far cry from the nearly empty, private shores that had witnessed eight human beings using their free will to behave worse than the most savage pack of animals. But Adam wasn’t thinking of that. No, he was holding the glinting sandcastle firmly in his mind as he drove, determined that the new sand pail and shovel from Kris would get used someday. Hopefully soon. The warm hand on his knee felt good, reassuring.

Two blocks from the beach Adam pulled onto a side street, parked, and promptly vomited through the open window, splattering the cement and side of the car with his reaction to the heavily salted air. The tears came fast then, but after ten minutes of sobbing into Kris’ chest, he found that he didn’t want to give up and leave just yet. At least I didn’t have a flashback. I can get through this, right? Right? Am I pushing my luck again?

“I got…snot on you and throw up on your car and…”

“Shhh, it’s fine, baby,” Kris crooned as he thumbed the tears away from Adam’s face. “Here, let me…” He reached into the glove box and pulled out a wad of yellow Burger King napkins. “They’re kinda old, but clean,” he offered with an apologetic smile.

“Thanks,” Adam snuffled. The ocean air mixed with bile was still heavy on his tongue and he spat a few times onto the street before blowing his nose. I’m okay, right? Am I? He drew a shaky hand over his forehead, trying to assess his state of mind. Shame - definitely present but not debilitating, and it was overshadowed by a sense of relief that he hadn’t dissociated or suffered a flashback. “That…that could’ve been worse?”

“Much worse,” Kris agreed immediately, taking the used napkins from Adam and tossing them on the floor in the back. “You’re okay,” he stated in a loving but firm tone as if he knew how much Adam needed to be assured of this fact.

“Yeah…yeah, I am.” A light breeze blew in through the open windows. Adam shuddered, not breaking eye contact with Kris. He needed the connection and security to calm his still racing heart and frazzled mind, which was telling him to run and stay at the same time. Adam could see a laughing boy in a cape with his inner eye, but the terrifying night of pain was also hovering on the very fringes of consciousness. “Help me,” he whispered in a wavering voice. “I don’t want to leave.”
Kris reached out and grasped both of Adam’s hands. “Tell me about when you and your family used to go to the beach,” he said with a warm, encouraging smile.

Think. You can do this. Adam took a deep breath, trying to bully his mind into focusing on the right memories. “We went a lot, almost every weekend if it was warm enough.” An image of his mother slathering liberal amounts of sunscreen all over him bloomed before his eyes. “I burn real easily,” he went on. “My mom put so much lotion on me that I looked like a ghost.” Kris chuckled softly, brown eyes glinting, and Adam found himself smiling a little. Good, go with that. “Neil thought it was funny to throw sand at me right after she was done. Mom got so pissed.”

Kris laughed again, quietly, and started circling his thumbs on the backs of Adam’s hands. “I can see it now. Adam the sandman.”

Adam knew that the smell of saltwater might trigger bad memories, but he’d forgotten that it could remind him of good ones, too. He sucked in the air and pushed past the queasiness still lingering in his stomach. “And then I’d go wash off in the ocean and she’d have to start all over again,” he grinned, loving the feel of his lover’s warm fingers and comforting touches that were giving him vitamin B shots of strength. “She eventually got wise to waterproof sunscreen.”

Adam continued for another ten minutes, telling Kris all about the time his dad had buried him and Neil in wet sand and how they couldn’t move no matter how hard they tried. They’d laughed until almost wetting themselves as their heads flopped around pointlessly until mom finally dug them out. By the time Adam was half way through relating the hermit crab story, he was chuckling heartily. “It was such a fucking big shell and Neil was so damn cocky about finding it. He nearly shit himself when it started moving! You should’ve seen his face,” Adam snickered.

“I am so going to tease him about that when he comes here in May.”

“Oh god, yes you have to!” The thought of their families getting together brought an even brighter smile to Adam’s face. “Do you think your grandma will come?” he asked, “because I would love for her to meet Nana.”

Kris made an expression of mock horror and then snorted. “I’ll try to convince her,” he said through a few giggles.

Dusk began to settle over the hazy evening, bringing a chill to Adam’s spine that had nothing to do with the lack of sunlight. The lurking creatures in his mind rubbed their hands together in gleeful anticipation, reminding him that this was not a good place to be at night. Adam’s smile faded and his breath felt like it was struggling to escape his suddenly dry throat. “Uhh, maybe we should go home now… I mean let’s just go, okay?” he croaked.

Don’t panic, just drive away. It’s going to be fine.

“Of course,” said Kris at once. “Besides, now that I’ve had a little time to recover from my wax job, I’m dying for you to see it.” He arched a brow suggestively at Adam, who was grateful that Kris had just given him something else to focus on even if he was doing it purposefully.

It’s okay to need help. I did good, and I’ll come back sometime. Soon. With a mental ‘fuck you’ to the dark images crawling towards his consciousness, he pulled away from the curb and tried not to speed during the drive home. I can’t wait to tell Sheila!

Both men were starving upon reaching their apartment so playtime had to wait until after dinner, but
they couldn’t stop themselves from kissing once Adam had brushed his teeth and Fifi had been let outside.

“You’re so brave,” whispered Kris against Adam’s lips as they embraced in the kitchen, Adam holding him firmly so he wouldn’t fall over while balancing on one foot. “I’m so proud of you, baby.”

Adam grinned and pressed their mouths together again. Things began to get a little heavy, mostly due to Adam sucking on Kris’ tongue relentlessly, and it was with a sigh of regret that he finally let his boyfriend go so he could get started on dinner.

When Kris went to let Fifi back inside, Adam opened the fridge and removed the Italian sausage he needed for the penne pasta dish Kris had pointed to in a cookbook last week. Not a bad choice coming from someone who used to live on processed food. This was one of the ways that Kris had found to express food preferences, and considering that Adam liked most of the recipes in his vast collection of cookbooks, it really was a win win situation.

As he browned and crumbled the sausage with the puppy close to his feet, Adam listened to the soft piano notes floating out from the studio. Kris’ playing was hindered by the fact that he couldn’t use the foot pedals, but Adam liked it anyway. It felt like home, domestic and peaceful. Can’t believe that six months ago I was missing out on things like this…no…no, not now…I don’t want to cry. The ocean began to roil like the surface of the pasta water, and Adam knew it was pointless to fight the sadness now that he allowed it to come and go as it pleased. He was still waiting for the waves to turn into ripples like Sheila had promised they would, but for now the meal might turn out to be a little saltier than usual.

Once he saw how much he was raining on the food, Adam backed up and continued to cook while his body shook silently. He was used to this by now. The more you let it out, the faster it’ll be over. It took until the pasta was tender but not chewy for the tears to finally relent.

The music stopped and Adam wiped his nose with a paper towel but didn’t bother to hide the fact that he’d been crying; Kris was used to it, too. I guess it says something that I don’t mind him seeing me like this anymore. He tried to take comfort in that, but the reassurance he truly needed came in the form of a soft kiss to his makeup smeared cheek.

“Delicious,” said Kris after swallowing his first bite. Adam smiled at him. This is my life now, and the ups are worth the downs. They ate their dinner in peaceful silence and then took a hot bath together with Kris nestled into Adam’s long body, his injured leg resting carefully on the pale one beneath him.

“So this is new,” Adam observed as he lightly scratched the small triangle of barely there hair on his boyfriend’s pelvis. “I like it.” Something different from the ones before. All of his potential targets had known he preferred his men completely waxed, and he’d just figured it was good fortune that Kris was, too. As he continued to massage the wet stubble and felt Kris shiver in response, however, Adam decided that he didn’t just like it; he fucking loved it.

“Really? You don’t mind…mmm that feels so good…”

“Of course not…it’s your body. Honestly I was surprised that you did it at all when we first met. You don’t seem like the type.”

Kris shuddered again before responding. “Didn’t used to, not until Ethan because he wanted me
totally bare. I kinda got into the habit though. Oh god…no, don’t stop…” he whined when Adam stilled his hand.

“You did it for him? To please him?” When Kris nodded, Adam let out a disapproving “hmph,” and went on to say that he didn’t care if Kris was as hairy as a bear if it would make him happy.

“What would make me happy is your hand on my dick right now. We can talk about that later.”

“Hmmm, getting bossy now? Good.” Adam walked his fingers slowly down Kris’ toned, damp chest until they were underwater. “Tell me what to do,” he purred as he licked at a bead of wetness on Kris’ shoulder, tasting skin and heat and the smell of his sexy lover. It was a heady combination that made his length ache and rise to attention against the small of Kris’ back.

“Hand…dick…and more of your mouth,” he breathed, grabbing Adam’s teasing right hand and curling it around his submerged shaft. “Like that…just like that,” he said huskily when Adam began to stroke him…slowly, up and down, with the pad of Adam’s thumb sweeping over his slit every time. A series of tiny groans mixed with halting gasps streamed through Kris’ lips as he arched into Adam’s fist, making the bathwater lap gently at the sides of the tub.

“So gorgeous.” Adam tilted his head and suckled at Kris’ neck just behind that perfect little ear, his lips and tongue nursing the skin into a hot, red mark. At the same time, he trailed his left hand down to the short fur at the base of Kris’ cock and started circling his fingernails in it, around and around. Adam fucking loved this, loved making his angel fall apart in his arms, loved the shuddering moans, the trembling muscles and the feel of flesh, wet and heavy in his hand. He pumped and scratched and nibbled the quivering body before him, intent on drawing all the cum and breath from it.

“Adam…Adam, oh god, baby, oh shit,” Kris gasped with the sudden cutting of Adam’s teeth at the back of his neck.

Fuck, I could do this all day. Adam didn’t speed up, just kept stroking lazily despite the fingers kneading desperately into his thighs, Kris’ blunt nails pressing a little harder with each bite of skin.

Kris was impatient, and when Adam ignored his plea of “faster…please,” he tried to take over.

“Oh no you don’t,” Adam taunted as he batted Kris’ hand away.

“You said to tell you what to do,” he growled in a voice so deliciously seductive that Adam’s dick twitched several times. “I want to come, make me fucking come!”

Oh my fucking god! There was no way he could deny such a hot command and he immediately began to squeeze, pump and twist Kris’ stiff cock with rapid jerks, yelping at the friction created by the writhing ass on his lap. His hand was a blur of motion, his fist slapping the water again and again. Their bodies bucked together and sloshed waves of water over the edge. He could feel it, a hungry python coiling tighter and tighter in his gut…and then, without warning, Kris rose up just enough to spread his cheeks and impaled himself completely.

“Fuck!” Adam cried. Shuddering and moaning, he clenched Kris’ dick convulsively until jets of cum spurted into the air and fell into their steamy bath. Adam’s mouth was instinctively drawn to the pulsing veins on the already marked up throat and he couldn’t help himself; he yanked Kris’ head back by the hair and sucked at them like a ravenous vampire, ruthless and dizzy with lust while the notes of Kris’ throaty release captivated his ears.
When at last he’d had his fill and Kris was boneless and spent and whimpering, Adam let his head fall back against the tiles and sighed. “Tell me what to do even more next time.”

“Punk,” murmured Kris. “I love you.”

Adam chuckled, scooped up some of the white liquid floating near Kris’ balls and used it to massage one last drop out of his flaccid length, giggling at the curses that earned him. “I love you, too, mister potty mouth.”

After about ten minutes of relaxing, Adam flipped the drain and helped get Kris situated in the show chair so they could rinse off. “So, I’m definitely digging your new look,” he smirked as they toweled their hair dry. “You should do whatever you want, even if that means never waxing again.” Wonder how it would feel to rim a hairy ass?

“I’ll think about it,” said Kris, “but I kind of like being smooth down there. We’ll see.” He turned his head to the door suddenly and started laughing at the little nose sniffing and poking underneath it. “I think someone is getting bored.”

“Fifi,” Adam grinned. “Let me help you get your cast back on and I’ll give her some attention.”

“You know the doc said I could start putting some weight on it this weekend. Only three more weeks and I can get rid of this stupid thing altogether,” he sighed as Adam tended to his leg.

I’m so glad he’s letting me do this now. “How’s it feeling?”

“Not too bad. Mostly itchy.” When Adam was finished, Kris stood up and reached for the clean pile of clothes on the counter. “I think I’ll do some emailing while you play with Fifi. Gotta check in with my professor about the demo and there’s a couple of ads I want to respond to.”

“Sounds good, babe.”

They kissed lightly and had what would be considered a very normal evening before climbing into bed and cuddling.

In the middle of the night, Adam woke with a start after having a weird dream about screaming people. Some kind of crowd. Bizarre. Oh shit! Today’s my meeting with Brian. He tensed, not because he was scared or anything, but out of nervous anticipation. Coming face to face with a young person behaving as he once had was a little disconcerting and he wanted to be a good mentor. What on earth is making him do this shit? God I hope he wasn’t abused or something.

“Mmph, you’re awake,” mumbled Kris sleepily.

“Shhh, go back to sleep, lover,” Adam responded with a kiss to the top of his head, and smiled when he heard his even breathing return. Six months together and just over a month of living together. Awesome. The happy thoughts were swimming peacefully in his mind when he closed his eyes and drifted off.

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His alarm went off at six o’clock. Although Adam didn’t have to get up this early, doing so meant that he could go running for an hour and still have time to fix a decent breakfast and snuggle Kris before heading out to work. The exercise seemed to be a crucial part of his mental well-being, and he wasn’t too keen on going to the gym at that hour because it was so crowded with all the nine-to-fivers. Adam had only been at his new job for a week and half, but already he felt a tad better about it as each day passed. He could choose clothing and prepare for the day with less anxiety, and Tommy had been regularly scarfing down lunch in the tiny staff room so that he could stay and help Adam get used to the public. It was damn nice of him.

He’d be lying if he said working with Tommy was relaxing, but Adam thought he was an okay guy nonetheless. Mellow, friendly and respectful, the blond man was determined to carry out his boss’ orders and went out of his way to make Adam feel comfortable. He didn’t pry, ask personal questions or stand too close, and the only thing Adam could complain about was Tommy’s tendency to share. The content was interesting enough, music, his cool new girlfriend Megan, and his thoughts on living with Matt, but this sort of easy relating reminded Adam of the way he used to be in high school. It made him a little sad and he hoped he could regain that part of his personality someday.

Adam liked it best when he was in the studio. Alex had allowed him to tidy up a small space for himself, and aside from the occasional words exchanged about clothing designs or the quality of coffee, they spent the hours in near silence. It was perfect, and Adam quickly became accustomed to the sounds of the sewing machine and the scratching of Alex’s pencil.

At eleven o’clock on Wednesday, Adam was finishing up a simple spiral pattern on a prototype shirt and thinking about Brian. In all the years he’d known the rather quiet kid, he’d never noticed anything out of the ordinary about his behavior and wondered what had changed in his life.

“Coffee,” mumbled Alex from behind his drawing board.

Adam smirked as he stood and pulled out a few bills from the large tin can near the door. He didn’t have to ask what his boss wanted anymore; it was always the same, black with three packets of raw sugar and none of that “Splenda crap.”

“Hey Tommy,” he said on his way out, and marveled at how casual and calm he sounded. Getting used to him. In fact, he thought it would probably go a lot faster with Tommy than Matt just because he saw the man more often.

“Adam, hold up a sec will ya?”

He stopped at the door and walked back when Tommy motioned for him. “What’s up?”

“Listen, I’ve got a problem on my hands. I just got off the phone with my mom and my dad’s in the hospital. He’s in critical condition, heart attack, and I need to go see him right away,” said Tommy with worry clearly etched in his delicate features.

Adam kept his face impassive even though he knew what was coming. He felt like someone had just yanked the starter cord to his anxiety motor. He wants me to cover for him. Fuck, that’s four hours! Don’t be a dick, Lambert, he needs to be with his family.

“I’m going to go talk to Alex. When he was in between assistants, he’d cover for me himself and I’m sure he wouldn’t mind helping you out.”

Shit. Although this would be better than doing it alone, Adam felt an instant pressure to be able to
handle everything perfectly in front of his boss, but all he could do was nod. He didn’t have a choice. Thankfully only one woman came to the counter while Tommy was gone.

“So.” The word seemed to carry a multitude of meanings when it fell out of Alex’s mouth. Adam turned around and saw him standing there holding a sketchpad and pencil, his baggy jeans and plain white tee shirt a stark contrast to the beautiful clothing he designed. *Is he mad? Annoyed at having to baby-sit me? He doesn’t look angry though, just… present.* It was the only concept Adam could come up with to describe the man’s body language.

“Thanks Alex, Adam…I’ll see you tomorrow,” Tommy said and quickly hurried off.

Alex indicated the door. “Coffee.”

“Oh, right.” *Almost forgot.*

Manning the counter with the older man was, of course, quieter than having Tommy around. Alex sat on a stool and sketched while sipping his brew as Adam tried not to feel self-conscious. A smattering of customers browsed the store; half of them were men and Adam wished that Tabby would come back with her stuffed puppy. He told his fingers to stop gripping a pen so hard when a man his age walked up with a pair of sunglasses and a beautifully worked vest in hand. “Afternoon,” he said evenly to the customer, who nodded at him without smiling.

“I can’t believe you charge this much for a vest,” the man scowled.

Adam was immediately offended on behalf of Alex. “Then you shouldn’t buy it. That gorgeous piece of clothing should only be worn by someone who can appreciate its value,” he said a little gruffly. He heard the smallest of laughs coming from Alex’s direction and smirked.

“Well, of course I appreciate its value,” say the guy, suddenly flustered. “I mean everyone knows about this place and…and of course I’m going to buy it.”

*Ass. You just want to show off to your friends that you shopped here.* “Alright then.” Adam rung him up, silently giggling to himself when the customer’s eyes bugged out at the total cost.

“Erm, yes, well, thank you.” The man waved halfheartedly at Alex as if trying to pay him a belated compliment, and then left the store.

“Jerk,” muttered Adam. Still, righteous indignation was better than anxiety.

“Did you notice his shoes?”

“Wha?” Adam looked over at his boss in confusion.

“His shoes. They were exquisite, but a very poor match to the black trousers.” Alex scratched his nose with the pencil and gave the closest thing to a smile that Adam had ever seen on him.

“I…I didn’t see them, wasn’t paying attention,” he stuttered.

“Pay attention next time.”

And that’s how Adam got through the rest of his day. He and Alex quietly analyzed nearly every man who entered the shop, just his clothing and style, and it was done in a very objective and
detached manner. The more Adam focused on these things, the less he worried about anticipating a triggering pair of eyes or set of jaw. It wasn’t smooth or perfect, but it worked.

Tommy usually stayed until the store closed, and Adam was sure that he’d be asked to do the same, but to his relief Alex sent him home at the usual time. He was supposed to meet Brain at four, but even more than that, he was fucking tired. What he wouldn’t give to have a brain that didn’t have to play mental tricks to keep him calm all afternoon. At least I managed it.

After leaving, Adam headed to the coffee shop were his cousin was due in an hour and plunked down with an espresso. I should call Kris, see how he’s doing. It was a bit of a pretense since Adam was the one needing the contact. As soon as he heard the sweet voice on the other end of the line, his muscles relaxed and he sank further into his seat. “Hi.”

“Hey, baby. How was work?”

He told Kris about Tommy having to go and they game he and Alex had played for the rest of his shift.

“I love your boss,” said Kris. “Thank god you ended up with someone like him.”

“Yeah, I know, I’m really lucky,” said Adam as he played with a coffee stirrer.

“He’s lucky, too, I mean to have you working there.”

“Oh please,” Adam snorted. I’m sure it’s a burden on him.

“No I’m serious. He obviously values you a lot, and with good reason I’m sure.”

“Hmmm. Well anyway, you should’ve seen the outfit on this one guy.” Adam began relating the details of the various clothing he’d observed that afternoon until it was clear that Kris wasn’t listening. “And then we had sex.”

“What?!?”

“Just making sure you’re still paying attention,” Adam chuckled.

“Dork.”

“Love you, too, angel.”

They talked for a little while longer about a positive response Kris had received from one of his emails asking about a job performing at a lounge, but had to hang up when Fifi started ringing the bell. Adam used the remaining time before four to mentally prepare himself, and by the time Brian walked in looking absolutely terrified, Adam felt composed and ready. I can so handle this.

“M-my mom says hi,” stuttered Brian as he sat across from Adam and began wringing his hands.

“Jesus kid, relax. I’m not gonna hurt you. I’m here to help, remember?”

“I’m really, really sorry about all that Kris stuff, I… I’m sorry.”

Ah fuck, I so don’t want to think about that. “Let’s not talk about it. What’s done is done,” he stated.
“How’s school going?”

Brian picked at a peeling fleck of paint on the wall and winced. “I’m still suspended. There’s some legal stuff. Anyway.” His hazel eyes stayed pointed downward as he grumbled under his breath, “this is all your fault.”

Adam’s jaw dropped. How the hell can he blame me? “What. the. fuck?”

An abrupt bang on the table made Adam jump and spill his coffee. “None of this ever would have happened if you hadn’t…but you did…and now I’m…shit!” Brian exclaimed, his eyes now boring holes into Adam’s.

“What in god’s name are you talking about?” Adam demanded, ignoring the mocha pool steadily making it’s way to the salt and pepper shakers.

“You! You and Kris and Starbucks and the club! Last Fall. I saw you!”

“What?”

A waitress dropped several mugs and they crashed onto the floor. Everyone was staring at them. “Shit. Shit.” Adam flung a twenty onto the table and stood up. “Come on.” This can’t be happening. There’s no way…we were alone in Starbucks…and the club? What the fuck?! He directed his cousin to a bench on the other side of the street and sat down. “Explain!”

“I was just minding my own business, walking down the street and I saw you both through the window.”

“And you stopped to watch us? What the hell Brian, that is really fucking creepy!” Adam was furious and totally wigged out by the stalker-like actions of his cousin. “And what, you followed us to the club? Did you listen at the door, too? Oh my god! You did, didn’t you!?”

“No! I mean yes, I mean I tried to, but some big ass guy kicked me out.” Brian curled his fists and visibly shuddered from head to toe. “You were so aggressive and in control…so powerful and Kris, he was like a toy in your hands. It was…I can’t explain it.”

Adam couldn’t believe it. His brain was undergoing something terribly painful with the very idea that his own behavior had caused Brian to go after Kris. Like a twisted, fucked up role model. Jesus! What the fuck am I supposed to do with this! Adam knew the allure of control, but not just anyone would fall victim to it. Something made him want that. This isn’t totally my fault, right? Goddamnit! “You…you need a therapist,” he said bluntly.

“Fuck that!” Brian spat. “What I need is for you to teach me how to do it better so I don’t get in trouble, so the person will want to be with me, like Kris wants you now.”

Adam leapt up from the bench at this and actually pointed a shaking finger at the younger man. “No fucking way! Oh my god, Brian, no! You shouldn’t be acting like I did, and I don’t anymore and I shouldn’t have in the first place!” Fuck! I bet he attacked someone at school!

“That’s how you get what you want. Lure them in like you did and then take control, right?” Brian growled, but there was a tinge of desperation to his voice that stabbed at Adam’s heart. Something bad happened to him.
Adam took a deep breath and attempted to manage the warring feelings of guilt, shock and concern. He sat back down. “No. That’s not the way to get what you want,” he said more gently. “It’s not healthy, and you really, really need to see a counselor.”

“But it worked for you!” Brian insisted.

“Only because Kris is special,” sighed Adam, shaking his head. There was no way to explain something so complicated to his cousin when he was in this state of mind. “Look, I’m not going to help you learn how to control people better, it’s not right, but I’ll still mentor you.”

Brian narrowed his eyes at Adam, his arms crossed in a huffy, stubborn stance that was all too familiar. “Why?”

“Because I’ve learned a lot since then. I can support you through this. You have to see a therapist though.” I have to be a better role model. I want to.

“You think I need professional help,” he said sarcastically. “You and my mom both. Well I’m not doing it, and I don’t need you if you’re not going to give me what I want!”

“Fine, Brian,” Adam said, feeling more weary than ever now. “You have my number if you change your mind.” And with that, he walked back to Kris’ car and drove home, still trying to convince himself that he was a good person. I need my angel.

“I’ve got you,” said Kris when Adam finally collapsed into his arms on the bed. "Whatever is it is, I've got you now."

Adam felt the truth of that statement deep in his tired bones, and he fell asleep almost immediately.

Chapter 57

Kris spent the first few minutes of Adam’s nap softly kissing his hair and murmuring words of affection that went unheard. He thought it would help anyway, like when people talk to someone in a coma. In this case, however, Kris imagined that his love was seeping into Adam’s dreams and comforting him somehow, wafting from his lips to that distraught mind. He assumed that Adam’s exhaustion had something to do with Brian or work or both. So much on his plate right now. Kris felt weary just thinking about it all and the desire to protect his lover from the weight of the world made him curl around Adam a little more. It was hard to spoon a six-foot-one man, but Kris made it work because he had cuddling powers that would make Winnie the Pooh jealous. He nipped a kiss at a lone freckle and dozed off murmuring, “I’ll take care of you.”

An hour later he heard a familiar giggle and opened his eyes to see Fifi licking Adam’s nose. The tall beauty fluttered his long lashes and yawned. “Hey girl,” Adam whispered, reaching out to scratch Fifi behind her ears, which were on the brink of losing their puppy floppiness forever. She turned around in place a few times the way dogs do for some mysterious reason and then curled up into a ball next to Adam’s stomach. Kris grinned at the cute scene but stayed still and quiet in case Adam was about to fall back asleep.

“I’m awake, angel, and I know you are too. You breathe different when you’re sleeping.”
“Just wanted to make sure you got enough rest,” said Kris as he nuzzled the back of Adam’s neck. *I love that he knows how I breathe. *“You okay?”

Adam sighed and continued to scratch Fifi’s muzzle. “I guess so. It’s just…Brian. I found out today that he spied on us when we first met.”

“He what?” Kris gasped, his arms immediately tightening around Adam’s chest.

“Spied.” Adam went on to recount the story like he was a bored professor reading lecture notes, droning and slow.

In addition to being totally creeped out, Kris felt sick to his stomach with shock, anxiety and anger by the time Adam was finished speaking. “How can he say it’s your fault? You know that’s not true, right? Oh god, baby, please tell me you don’t believe it,” Kris pleaded.

“I...” A little puppy whine sounded when Adam moved Fifi so he could roll over and face Kris, unguarded vulnerability sloshing around in those crystalline eyes. “I know that…I think,” he said softly.

“You think? Adam, the kid has problems. You didn’t make him do anything. You’re not responsible for…whatever he did at school.” He traced the worry lines on Adam’s forehead. *Stupid Brian! Like Adam doesn’t have enough to deal with already!* There was a dash of sympathy woven throughout Kris’ emotions as well, but it was easily overshadowed by concern for his boyfriend. His reassuring touches halted when a shuffling beat blared into the silence.

Adam reached over to the nightstand to answer his ringing phone. “Hello? Oh hi Aunt Lorraine.”

Kris sat up quickly. *That’s Brian’s mom.*

“No, I haven’t seen him since then,” said Adam, his face drawn in apprehension now. “Well if he does, I’ll call you right away and--”

*He’s gone missing. Shit.* Kris scrubbed at his eyes, attempting to shove away the growing urge to care about what happened to Brian. He wanted to stay mad at the eighteen-year-old who seemed to be more trouble than he was worth at this point.

“No he didn’t tell me.” After a brief moment, Adam’s eyes went wide and he clapped a hand over his mouth. Kris gripped the sheets, waiting anxiously until Adam finally hung up looking a little shaken. “He was supposed to come home in time to go to a therapy appointment.”

“He has a therapist? Well that’s--”

“Kris, it’s part of his sentence, but my aunt said he’s refusing to go. He did attack someone at school. She told me…said that he cornered a kid in the locker room, pushed him into a wall and tried to kiss him, but luckily the kid got away and ran. His family pressed charges though and since Brian’s eighteen…”

“Damn.” It wasn’t as bad as Kris had feared, but still, Brian seemed to be heading down a path that could only lead to jail time. *Adam would never have done something like that.*

“Lorraine said he’s been acting really weird, not like himself, ever since his senior year started, but he won’t tell anyone what’s wrong and now he’s missing,” said Adam, shaking his head. “I’m so
worried about him, and what if he really hurts someone next time?”

Kris understood, but it didn’t lessen the itch to punch Brian for making Adam’s life more complicated than it already was. “Baby, I get that, but maybe you stay out of this. Even if he does show up and agree to being mentored, maybe you shouldn’t,” he said carefully. “He needs professional help.”

“I know,” Adam said as he flopped back onto the bed. Fifi took her place on his stomach at once. “I don’t want to be his therapist, but people shouldn’t be abandoned just because they have issues. That’s not right,” he stated rather fiercely. “Plus I feel like…like…” He paused and pulled Kris to his side. “Like a person who’s been going to Alcoholics Anonymous and how they’re supposed to sponsor someone else who’s in recovery.”

Huh. Never thought about it that way. “Oh. I mean…” Kris didn’t know what he meant. He was still worried about Adam taking on so much, but he wasn’t about to stand in the way of more progress. Not that I could. He’ll do what he wants, just like me.

“I guess it’s kind of selfish and dumb, isn’t it? I’m not really in AA and Brian isn’t in any kind of treatment.”

“No way, it’s not either of those. My only concern is you, and if this is what will make you happy, help your recovery then I’m all for it.”

“Really? You’ll still support me in this, I mean if he changes his mind and lets me be his mentor?”

“Course I will, but what if he doesn’t change his mind?”

Adam turned his head and kissed Kris on the temple. “Well, there’s always mentoring programs I could look into, right?”

Kris stared at him. “You’re really serious about this, aren’t you?”

“Yeah I am. You know, I haven’t really thought about it until now, but I want to help someone younger than me…make a difference. I never had anyone like that, not that I’d have agreed to it back then. This thing with Brian, it’s not out of guilt. I just want…he probably feels really alone, like no one understands him,” he finished quietly. Kris prepared to comfort him, but instead Adam took a deep breath and said, “People do things for a reason. I’m not trying to justify his actions, but…he should know that he’s not alone.” There was a note of steely resolve in his voice that made the hairs on the back of Kris’ neck stand up.

After a second of gazing at Adam’s beautiful, earnest face, Kris’s mouth stretched into a glowing smile full of blazing love. “You are amazing, do you know that? Do you have any idea how incredible you are?” he said as he tried to clamber on top of Adam because he suddenly had to be closer than close, to bask in the noble spirit emanating sun-like from Adam’s being. He pushed gently at Fifi until she reluctantly gave up her spot and then let his spazzing heart take over his actions. Thank god for him… thank… everything.

Adam didn’t have a chance to respond to the rhetorical questions, not with a love-sick fool crawling all over him and claiming his mouth repeatedly.

“So amazing…love you, love you,” breathed Kris in between ravenous kisses while doing his best to keep his casted leg out of the way. Adam’s fingers darted into his hair and yanked hard while lips
began to press, suck and nibble until Kris was panting, losing himself in pawing hands and heat. He felt giddy and high and all he wanted at that moment was for Adam to realize his own beauty, inside and out. And then the proverbial light bulb sparked into life with the most perfect idea of how Kris could show him. He rolled away, giggling as Adam scrabbled at him.

“Where the hell do you think you’re going? You can’t leave me like this!” he exclaimed, gesturing to the enormous bulge in his jeans that looked like it wanted to burst out and pin Kris to the bed in one thrust.

Kris chuckled and batted his eyelashes. “Do me a favor?”

“Only if it involves getting naked somehow,” moaned Adam with a petulant buck into the air.

“Oh it will,” he promised in his best sexy purr. “All you have to do is follow me into the bathroom.” One teasing lick of the lips was all it took for Adam to jump off the bed and sweep Kris into his arms. “You said I could carry you if it was for sex,” he laughed. Kris didn’t complain, but Adam did once he realized they weren’t going to be showering together.

“Go with me on this,” said Kris as Adam set him down on the counter next to the sink. “I want to show you something.” He scanned Adam’s side of the vanity until he found what he was looking for in the middle of an eye-popping amount of makeup and hair products all neatly organized in little rows. “Can you see yourself over my head?”

Adam nodded, a tiny smirk twisting the side of his mouth. He stepped up to the counter and pulled Kris closer to the edge so that their groins were touching, denim to blue polyester. “Show me,” he said with a roll of his hips.

“Ohh you devil, you,” chortled Kris, trying to focus on the task at hand instead of the tingling pleasure skittering throughout his body. He picked up a container, unscrewed the lid and removed a single cleansing pad. “Now hold still.”

Adam’s smile slipped. “Angel, I don’t--”

“Shhh. Please, just let me.” Their eyes met for a moment, silently communicating love and safety.

“Okay.”

“You’re gorgeous,” Kris began as he cupped Adam’s jaw with his left hand. “I remember the first time I saw you at Macy’s and Matt had to tell me to stop staring at you.” Adam grinned and relaxed his shoulders. Good. “It’s true, my mouth was totally hanging open.” He placed the thin, wet cotton to Adam’s forehead and drew it slowly from left to right, watching the freckles appear like stars coming out at night after a hazy day.

“You did look like a deer in the headlights,” Adam giggled.

“I was. I felt completely out of my league.” Another pad, another swipe and then Kris pressed a tender kiss to his lover’s clean temple, his nose wrinkling a bit at the astringent smell of the cleanser.

“You were never out of your league,” Adam said softly. They smiled at each other.

“I know that now.” Kris plucked out a third pad and set to work on Adam’s cheeks. “Look at yourself.”
Adam glanced up into the mirror. “Freckles,” he mumbled. “I know you like them, but…”

“God, or whoever, made you just perfect. I love your glam look and I love your natural look. You’re beautiful no matter what. I mean, who has cheekbones like this? Honestly.” His tone was playful but he could tell by the sparkle in Adam’s eyes that his message was getting through. The wet cotton erased every trace of carefully applied foundation, powder, blush and concealer to reveal the pale skin beneath. So innocent. Kris connected the two in his mind. He imagined Adam as a boy, a teenager, friendly and trusting. In this light he could just make out a touch of ginger at the roots of Adam’s black hair. “And those lips,” he continued. “Full, pouty, sexy… even without lip gloss. See that? See how perfect they are? I wanted to kiss them the moment I laid eyes on them.”

“Me too, I mean yours.” Adam appeared to be entranced by the process of having his face and neck cleaned and his gaze followed every movement of Kris’ hand reflected in the mirror. “I use different stuff to take off the eyeliner and mascara.”

He likes this. “I know, baby.” Clean cotton balls and eye makeup remover. How many times had Kris seen Adam de-glam? He couldn’t count the number. “Close your eyes now.” His fingers trembled a little as he worked, the over soaked cotton sending trickles of liquid down that stunning face. Kris moved his left hand a fraction and felt a strong pulse under Adam’s jaw. Blue eyes shifted ever so slightly under their delicate lids; all was quiet save for their breathing and a few puppy yawns coming from the corner of the bathroom. A spell of unexpected intimacy settled over them, each stroke of the cotton confirming that the Fates had gotten it right with Adam Lambert and Kris Allen.

“You’re a good person.”

Adam’s eyes fluttered open, makeup free and glistening. He looked at Kris without expression.

“You’re a good person,” Kris repeated as he dried Adam’s cheeks with a tissue. Please let him believe that. “Beautiful body, beautiful heart. Nothing has ever changed that, I’m sure of it, and nothing ever will. You’re a lover, a nurturer. You care about people.” He held his partner’s face gently, willing Adam to take in his words. “Some day when we have children, you’ll be the most amazing dad in the world. You’ll tuck in our daughter or son at night, read them stories and dress them up in the coolest outfits.” Kris’ heart surged at these thoughts and thumped even louder when Adam finally smiled all the way to his eyes. If I could get paid to make him smile like that, I’d do it twenty-four seven. “You know I’m right.”

He caught the barest of nods before Adam embraced him, and the slick warmth of that long tongue exploring his mouth felt like gratitude. Kris managed to get two of Adam’s shirt buttons undone before he was lifted from the counter and carried back to the bedroom where Adam worshipped him from head to toe. Thirty minutes later he came with his lover’s lips stretched tight around him, swollen and red and perfect. All of his senses were blissed out, and it was almost too much when Adam ducked down and began to lap up all the cum he’d released into Kris’ body. Sharp cries became shuddering moans, every lick and thrust of tongue sending Kris to greater heights of pleasure until his length became hard again and made another mess for Adam to take care of. Only one thought swirled around in his fuzzy brain during the kiss that followed. I am loved.

After an hour of serious snuggling, they threw on some boxer shorts, ordered pizza and ate it in bed while watching a romantic comedy. Fifi hopped up to join them. She looked at the tasty food - her nose going a mile a minute - but she knew better than to beg and just stretched her tiny form across the couple’s legs with a sigh. If she’d been able to talk she would’ve said, “I love you both even though you won’t give me pizza.”
All throughout her obedience class that weekend, she seemed to strut around as if showing off the fact that her ears were finally standing up straight on their own. “Such a big girl,” Adam and Kris had cooed when they let her out of her room that morning. She was the only witness to Kris’ yelps of glee after a phone call the next week and watched as he tried to dance around with those weird metal sticks he used these days. Fifi didn’t understand the words he said to Adam about “they said I just need to get a fan base going and they’ll consider signing me,” but she could tell that he was excited and jumped around his feet to show her joy.

She was a smart dog and had a knack for sensing the emotions of her people. If Adam was sad, like the time he came home crying about “almost freaking out at work,” she’d do her best to comfort him along with Kris’ hugs. But Fifi liked it best when everyone was happy, even if it meant that sometimes she had to go find her toys because her owners started wrestling and playing with each other.

A week and a half after being denied that yummy pizza, Fifi was spending a Friday evening alone. It had been over a month since Adam brought her home, and that night she’d finally been allowed to roam the apartment freely while Kris and Adam were out. She pounced on her hamburger, whined at the few squirrels she could see in the quickly fading light outside and attempted to paw open the kitchen cabinets close to the floor.

When Kris returned from seeing a movie with his college friends, he eventually found her curled up and sleeping in a large pot under the sink. “Fifi! Oh my god, girl, Adam would flip if he knew you’d been in there,” he laughed. “Good thing he’s not back from the club yet.” He scooped her out and proceeded to clean the pot thoroughly, humming as he worked and tested his injured leg. After his last x-ray, the doctor had given him permission to start putting weight on it. Moving around on crutches was easier now, too, which meant that getting up and down the theater steps that night hadn’t been a problem. *Jason’s face was so priceless when I told him about my call from Aware Records. “Gonna get signed, gonna get a record deal,” he chuckled and sang to the soapy water. But I need more exposure! How will I get a fan base otherwise?*

Macy’s was getting antsy to have him back, but Kris still hadn’t figured out what to do about that. He really didn’t want to work there anymore. *But even if I get a performing job, there’s no guarantee that it’ll pay the bills.* “What do you think Fifi? Should I keep selling ties, at least part time?” She blinked at him and tilted her head. “Yeah I agree, doesn’t sound very fun.” *And why hasn’t Adam heard back about his demo yet? It’s so amazing and he’s already got fans.* “Wouldn’t it be awesome if we both got signed,” he continued as if the puppy were in conversation with him. “Maybe someday we could afford to buy you a whole wardrobe of sweaters. I should at least get you a better carrier than a backpack.” Kris dried the pot and put it back in the cabinet, thinking that they might have to Fifi proof the doors.

He was on the couch sipping at a beer and sketching a pair of gorgeous eyes when Adam came home from work hanging on Alisan’s arms, clearly wasted. “Hiii angelll,” he giggled, staggering a little as he attempted to walk.

“You drank in public? At work?” Kris looked at Matt and Alisan, who were guiding him to a chair with difficulty, especially since Matt was trying not to touch him out of respect for Adam’s boundaries. “What happened?”

“His set was a hit!” exclaimed Matt. “You should’ve seen him, man, the crowd was going crazy for him.”
“Well that’s not unusual. He’s mega talented after all.”

“Anngellll, come kiss meee!”

Kris laughed even though he was slightly worried by Adam’s behavior. “You dork, I’ll kiss you when you’re sober.”

“Noo, kiss me nowww!” he pouted, waving his hands in the air like a fretting rag doll.

Alisan finally managed to get him settled and pushed her hair out of her flushed face. “Damn you’re heavy, puppy! Anyway, Matt’s right. Adam was on fire tonight and his fans, male and female, were eating it up. He got really tense when they wouldn’t leave him alone after the show and decided that a few drinks would help him loosen up. I think he’s trying to get used to the attention…didn’t want to run away from it. I told him I’d keep an eye on him to make sure nothing happened, but he got carried away with the vodka martinis.”

“We had to stop him from dancing with some chick who was all over him,” chuckled Matt. “Doesn’t seem to matter that he’s gay. I felt like a bodyguard when it came to the guys who wouldn’t back off.”

Kris frowned and shared a concerned look with Alisan. There was good reason Adam didn’t drink in public and they both knew why. He felt a little annoyed with Alisan for letting him do it and she seemed to know what he was thinking. “He’s a grown man, Kris. I can’t tell him what to do, especially when he’s being stubborn.”

So it’s not okay to use booze as an escape, but it’s fine to use it for courage?

Adam whined and started to get up. “Anngell why won’ you kiss meee?” At this point he was more incapacitated than Kris with a broken leg.

“Fine, you oaf.” Kris hopped over and plunked down onto his boyfriend’s lap. “Happy now?” He couldn’t help but smile at the kissy fish lips directed at him and finally relented to a sloppy smooch.

“So I guess you can take over now?” asked Matt, chortling when Kris gasped and begged for help to get Adam into bed.

“I’ll do it,” said Alisan. “You two catch up, I can manage him. Come on, puppy.”

But Adam refused to be separated from Kris and insisted in a fit of giggles that Kris be the one to undress him. “So you kin see my peenusus. Peeenussss!”

Everyone burst into laughter, even Matt. “Please, please go with him before he starts sharing right here!”

“Peeenussss!” called Adam again as Alisan hauled him off to the bedroom while Kris hobbled along behind them. Thank god he’s a silly drunk. Once they successfully removed his clothes and shoved his floppy body into bed, Kris only had to fend off his groping hands for a few minutes before he passed out.

He would’ve liked to talk to Alisan some more about Adam, but since Matt was there he decided it could wait. They chatted instead about Kris’ prospects of getting signed and Alisan’s job at Spin City. “I would totally pimp your album,” she said with a cheeky grin. “Give you a whole display
A pleased blush crept up Kris’ neck at his friends’ encouragement and he hugged them both tightly before they called it a night and left. Kris finally crawled into bed next to Adam at one in the morning. Dork. You totally could’ve handled that without drinking. He vowed to prove it the very next day. If Kris had known how April 10th would change his life, he might have been more excited about greeting the morning when he woke up to a very hungover and grumpy Adam.

The first words out of that pretty mouth were, “fuck, my head.”

“Good morning to you, too. Want some Tylenol?”

“Ugh. Please. And why is it so goddamn bright in here?”

Kris smirked and gave him a light kiss on the cheek. “Because you are an idiot who got drunk last night even though you didn’t have to.”

“Hmph. You weren’t there.” Adam pulled his pillow over his face and groaned.

“Well I heard all about it from Ali,” said Kris as he reached for the crutches. “You’re brave enough without vodka.” He got up and started to head for the bathroom to get some painkillers.

“Says you.”

“Damn right I do. I’m coming to work with you tonight and you’ll see. I’d be happy to get wasted with you at home though, just so I can hear you yell ’peenuss’ some more,” he laughed, easily dodging the poorly aimed pillow Adam hurled at him.

It took the better part of an hour, a strong cup of coffee and two Tylenol for the grimace to leave Adam’s face, but with that came the onset of anxiety. “I can’t handle fans. I’m never going to be famous,” he said over a bowl of cereal. “It was better when I kept everyone at a distance. Maybe I should go back to that.”

There were dark clouds outside foretelling a nasty storm, and it made the apartment feel gloomy. “You can’t be serious,” said Kris. He took another bite of crunchy oat something or other. He doesn’t mean that. He’s just scared.

A shadow fell across the table as they stared at each other, Adam’s eyes a clear window to the mess of emotions obviously tearing him up inside. At last he shook his head and sighed. “No. It’s just hard and I was wishing you were there to help me.” The wince and pink tinge to his cheeks told Kris that he was wrestling with shame among other things.

Kris wanted to strangle that emotion so it would leave his lover alone forever. He reached over and grasped Adam’s hand. “You can do this. You just need to find a balance of not pushing them away but not letting them get too close.”

“I don’t know how.” The quiver in his voice shot straight to Kris’ heart.

He swallowed around the lump in his throat, determined to stay strong. “I’m gonna help. I’ll be your
bouncer tonight and I’ll be way better at it than Matt.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.” Kris stood up. “Come on and take a shower with me, because as much as I’d love to make out right now, you totally reek, baby.”

That finally got a laugh.

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“And now it’s time to present the certificates!” Annie shrieked happily, gesturing to all the graduating puppies and their owners. “You’ve all done remarkably well! Congratulations!”

_I can’t believe I haven’t gone deaf. Thank god this is the last class._ Kris was happy despite the assault to his ears and he reached down to pat Fifi’s head while stealing a quick glance at Adam. Both of them had expressed feeling a bit like proud parents as they picked out her sweater that afternoon, but Kris had drawn the line at jewelry. “There is no way we’re putting sparkly necklaces on our dog!”

They walked Fifi forward to accept her certificate and beamed at the applause from the other owners. As a special reward, the couple went to an enclosed dog park afterwards and spent several hours playing with Fifi. She stuck close to them, but every once in a while she’d run off to investigate another dog. Later as Adam and Kris snuggled on a blanket, they laughed at her attempts to get at a chattering squirrel sitting atop one of the fences and taunting her.

When it was too dark to make out her tiny body anymore, the little family packed up and drove home to have dinner. Adam made a simple meal of baked fish, rice and salad and then got ready for work.

***

“Ladies and gentlemen, it’s my great pleasure to give you….Adam Lambert!” A deafening roar erupted from the audience and Kris gaped. _Holy shit! The crowd practically doubled since I was last here!_ The new but rather small club was bursting at the seams with people of all ages and persuasions clamoring for Adam. Kris tried to take it all in. Of course his boyfriend had been known around Los Angeles for years, but this was not the kind of reaction he’d had at the old club. Perhaps it was the new venue, the larger variety of songs Adam sang or how he allowed himself to really interact with the audience during performances now. Whatever the reason, his fans were clearly beside themselves, chanting and clapping wildly when he appeared on stage. And as much anxiety as Adam might have about the potential loss of privacy and personal space that came with notoriety, he was a born performer and it showed. Gone was the reserved man whose set had been like a hit and run in the past. Although he never got too close to the crowd, he sang to them, smiled playfully and danced with all of the jaw dropping flexibility that made him such a spectacular lover.

“Whooooo!” Kris pumped his fist in the air along with Alisan, Matt and the rest of the excited audience. “Go baby go!” That organ beating inside his chest, that one screaming with love and pride for his man, well it was pretty much the biggest Adam Lambert fanboy or fan organ or fan something
in the history of forever. When Adam sang right to his table, he certainly felt like one of those girls he’d seen faint on ‘The Best of the Beatles’ DVD that was tucked right next to Adam’s similar Led Zeppelin collection. His stupid cast prevented him from jumping up and down, but he managed to chair dance quite well.

“Thank you! Thank you very much!” Adam called out with a bow when the show was over. “I’ve got a special encore for you all tonight! Please join me in welcoming the very talented Kris Allen to the stage!”

“What?” Kris looked worse than a deer in the headlights. He was one of those anime characters with eyes as big as his entire face. But…but…I…

“Go on man!” cheered Matt.

“Did…did you guys know about this?”

“Nope! Now go!” Alisan prodded.

Adam was beaming at him with a mischievous glint in his eyes. Oh he is in so much trouble for this! The crowd parted for him as he made his way to the stage, their expressions friendly and curious.

“You need a hand there?” teased Adam.

“Punk.” Kris was an expert with his crutches now and navigated the stairs just fine on his own.

“Trust me, angel,” Adam whispered. “You’ll thank me for this later.” He walked off stage for a minute, leaving Kris to handle all the expectant faces turned in his direction, and returned with a guitar and a stool. “Kris Allen, everyone! Give him a hand!”

A polite applause broke out for the unknown singer and Kris sat down to make sure the guitar was in tune. What the hell should I play? Oh god, I wish I’d known…I could’ve prepared for this! Thank god I wore nice shorts tonight.

He’d never performed in front of this many people. His heart thumped manically and he wiped a sweaty palm on his thigh. Get a grip. The first song that popped into his brain was ‘Ain’t No Sunshine’ because it was the last one he’d sung to Adam. Before he knew it, the music and words (lyrics changed to ‘he’ of course) were pouring out of him and the borrowed guitar. It was deathly quiet out there, but he closed his eyes and remembered the way he felt the first time he’d made love to Adam.

He didn’t notice the harsh lights go down or the single spotlight softly radiating around the stool. In his mind there was only Adam and the afterglow of profound love and connection. The microphone was a pair of freckled lips and the gasp he heard from the side of the stage was Adam falling apart under his body. He ended the song an octave higher than usual and let his voice trail off into silence. Blood flowed south and he was achingly hard when a loud chorus of cheering made him open his eyes at last. Kris sucked in a sharp breath, almost having forgotten that he wasn’t alone with Adam. They liked it! He smiled and said thank you into the mic, noting more than a few sniffles and hands wiping at eyes. Wow.

Adam walked over to him with the crutches and didn’t hesitate to kiss him full on the mouth in front of everyone. His mascara was running. Would it be wrong to have sex on stage?

After a few cat calls the couple left the stage together and Kris took up his bouncer duties. The four friends grabbed a booth near the back. Kris and Matt sat on the ends, which allowed Adam to
interact with fans while nestled between his best friend and his boyfriend. It worked well, and several of the people coming up to the table also stopped to congratulate Kris on a fantastic performance. In the next hour, Adam drank only one martini and signed a handful of autographs.

“See?” said Kris. “Told you that you could handle this.”

“See?” said Adam. “Told you that you’d thank me later.”

They chuckled and made goofy eyes at one another, but they weren’t the only couple at the table wanting to get it on. Alisan and Matt started sucking face so hard that Matt was in danger of drowning under his girlfriend’s attention.

“Excuse me.”

Kris snapped his head around, ready to ward off yet another cute boy trying to get Adam to dance. His eyes met a short, thin man dressed in khakis and a white t-shirt who looked to be in his thirties.

“Sorry to interrupt, but I just wanted to personally thank you for such an excellent rendition of Ain’t No Sunshine.”

“Of course I am!” Kris blurted out. “Er, yes. I’m looking.” He ignored the muffled giggles from the three doofuses at his booth and stood up. “I’ve been to Ground Zero. Awesome place, but don’t you guys do scheduled events?” The coffee shop was on the University of Southern California campus, about a twenty minute drive from WeHo, but it was extremely popular and Kris had done a couple of open mics there.

Ray nodded. “Indeed. We’ve got people lined up almost every night of the week, but what we really need is a regular during the day. Lots of students come in and out and we’re hoping to attract even more business. I think you just might fit the bill. Here’s my card. Call me if you’re interested.” And with that the guy left.

Kris held the rectangle in his hand, nearly shaking with elation.

“Speak! Say something you idiot! “Of course I am!” Kris blurted out. “Er, yes. I’m looking.” He ignored the muffled giggles from the three doofuses at his booth and stood up. “I’ve been to Ground Zero. Awesome place, but don’t you guys do scheduled events?”

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“Wha?” Kris glanced down and started to laugh. It was completely black with a bright blue sketch of a phone booth on it. A little man wearing a ‘GZ’ cape was inside pointing to Ray’s name and number. “A job. I’m going to have a job performing music!”

Adam pounced on him. “I told you! You brilliant, talented, amazing man!” Kiss after kiss rained down on Kris’ face, a storm not unlike the one outside, and he happily found himself tackled to the bench under Adam’s hot body.

Yeay!
The sounds of covert masturbation were slinking through the silence of Kris and Adam’s bedroom. It was three in the morning. One man slept deeply while the other had just woken up horny as fuck due to a wild dream in which he’d been fucking his boyfriend’s brains out. His knuckles shifted against the sheets as he stroked needily, thinking about the mouth-watering cock lying mere inches from his thigh. He was very close to waking the other man up, but he couldn’t bring himself to disturb such a peaceful slumber.

In his mind there were lips sliding up and down his dribbling shaft, a hand cupping his balls and two fingers teasing his clenching hole. He moaned, quietly, and was suddenly desperate for more slickness than precum could provide no matter how much kept leaking from his slit. Carefully, he reached over and curled his left hand around a bottle of lube on the nightstand. The gorgeous man beside him did not stir. But just to be safe, he popped open the cap underneath his pillow to muffle the noise before squeezing the bottle over his palm.

A tiny whimper squeaked in his throat when the slippery liquid finally made contact with his engorged length. Fuck, it was almost as good as the feeling of a certain tongue swirling around and around and…shit. He had to bite his lip, hard, to keep from letting out a gasp that would surely give him away. Pull, twist, swipe, pump. He repeated the sequence until the striped tent began to rise and fall in a sinful rhythm. Fine lines crinkled in the corners of his eyes as he squeezed them shut. He tasted a hint of copper and tried to ease up on his lower lip. The over stimulated synapses of his brain registered nothing but the seductive image of a head bobbing up and down like that of a ravenous animal who’d been denied meat for days.

The lube on his cock *snicked*, mixing with the double thump of his pumping hand, and though his eyes were closed they still rolled back in ecstasy. He was getting lost, so lost that he almost missed the faint rustle of sheets next to him.

“Need some help with that?”

“Fuck, yeah. Get that crooked mouth of yours on my dick. Now.”

In the pitch black of night, a wicked chuckle sounded.

Chapter 58

Adam waited nervously with Kris in the exam room, picking at his nail polish and eyeing Kris’ cast. “It seems like too soon.”

“Adam, we’ve been over this a million times in the last week. Dr. Nelson knows what he’s doing.”

“But what if it’s not fully healed and…and you walk around on it and something happens?”

Kris sighed. “You’re being ridiculous.” He sat on the exam table and drew Adam to his body.
“Everything’s gonna be fine, you’ll see.”

The tender kiss they shared calmed Adam’s anxious heart…a little.

After the cast was removed, the doctor prodded, bent and stretched Kris’ leg until he seemed satisfied that all was as it should be.

Adam was watching closely, monitoring Kris’ face for any signs of pain. “Are you sure it’s not too early for this? It’s only been five weeks. Don’t broken legs take longer to heal?”

Kris rolled his eyes and looked at his physician. “Can you help me out here?”

The man chuckled. “Non-displaced stable fractures such as the one Kris sustained heal fairly rapidly, and the air cast sped up the recovery time as well.” Dr. Nelson smiled at Adam before continuing. “Your boyfriend’s leg is going to be just fine and the physical therapy exercises will help him regain the muscle and strength he lost. Obviously he should take it easy with certain things, but--”

“Like what? What kind of things?” Adam cut in, ignoring Kris’ exasperated face. This is serious business.

Dr. Nelson opened his mouth to reply, but seemed to remember that Kris was a grownup and spoke to him instead. “No running, jumping or weightlifting that’s not approved by your physical therapist. Just use common sense, Kris. Don’t push yourself and listen to your body,” he advised as he shuffled some paperwork. “Here’s the referral to Dr. Bressler, she’s an excellent physical therapist. I want you to come back in two weeks for a check up.”

Kris smirked at Adam while bouncing his pale and slightly atrophied calf muscle on the exam table. “See? I’m good. We should go celebrate my freedom.” He winked playfully when Dr. Nelson turned away.

Forever my feisty rabbit. “Alright, you’ve convinced me.” Adam shoved through the lingering guilt about the car accident and helped his boyfriend off the table. Kris took a few tentative steps, grinning as he began to walk around the room with increasing confidence. It was hard to deny the intensity with which Adam cared about this man, feeling like every breath pumping through his lungs must be stamped with K.A. + A.L. He’s going to be okay. His leg is healed. He loves me and he’s happy. So close to a record deal and starting the new job on Monday. Everything is great. Relax, Adam.

“Make an appointment at the front desk,” said the doctor before leaving. “Take care, you two.”

“So how should we celebrate your liberation?” Adam was hoping to hear something like ‘please bend me and half and have your way with me,’ and didn’t expect the answer he got.

“Actually I was thinking we might take a walk near the beach. Not on it obviously, but maybe across the street? You’ve been saying you want to try it. Plus it’d feel so good to use my leg again…we could kill two birds with one stone that way,” Kris finished in a hopeful tone.

Yes, Adam had said he wanted to try it and he’d been successful with several drive-by visits. However, it was one thing to know he could quickly escape via car if necessary, but walking so close to the ocean…his stomach squirmed uncomfortably at the idea. Don’t be a fucking wuss, Lambert. But what if I’m not ready? Suck it up and be a man for god’s sake. Shut the fuck up, it doesn’t work that way! I have to be ready and I’m not sure I am. Only one way to find out then, isn’t there?
“Adam?”

“Sorry, angel,” he said like a zombie, then shushed the internal argument with a shake of his head and cleared his throat. “Alright, let’s do it.” A teeny shiver inched its way across his shoulder blades and dissipated into the sterile room.

***

There’s nothing quite like Santa Monica on a Friday afternoon. It’s as if the air can tell that the weekend has begun and tries its damndest to be warm and breezy for the mass of stressed out locals and tittering tourists.

“Will you just leave me the fuck alone!” growled a petite starlet trying to escape the paparazzi as they stalked her down the boardwalk. For such a short woman she had quite a powerful presence and they backed away quickly, their cameras still clicking as she kicked off her expensive heels and dashed toward the ocean. She ran past a raucous game of volleyball and a boy crying at the sight of his sandcastle falling down. The perfect weather had drawn in families, men loosening their ties after a long week and more pale visitors on vacation than the pier had seen since last summer. In fact, so many people filled the shoreline that the waves had to roar extra hard to be heard. They had no chance, however, of reaching Kris and Adam’s ears.

Two blocks away on a tree lined side street, the couple sat quietly in Adam’s repaired car staring at each other. Kris, dressed in a plain white tee and regular jeans once again now that he was cast-free, wore a reassuring grin on his face, but Adam felt like a fucking mess. He tried to breathe in the calm emanating from his boyfriend and for the hundredth time in the past hour, he told himself that he could do this. The chestnut eyes shining at him obviously agreed.

Then why do I feel like I’m going to puke?

Kris squeezed his hand. “You ready?”

No. Absolutely not. “Yes.”

One last kiss and they were opening the car doors and stepping out into the glorious afternoon. Adam paid no attention to the leaves fluttering softly overhead or the dappled sunlight playing on the hood of his car; the beauty around him was lost to anxiety.

What if I panic in the middle of the street? What if I have a flashback right there in front of everyone? His head began to swim and suddenly he knew that he really couldn’t do this, at least not today, and it wasn’t just nerves. They’re too close. Adam heard them snickering, could almost see their faces distorted in gleeful rage. The memories taunted, and he was vulnerable.

Kris stretched his arms above his head and took a few steps. “Damn it feels good to be off those crutches!”

“Stop. I... I don’t want to go. I changed my mind. Let’s just sit in the vehicle like last time.” Before Kris could respond, Adam got back in the vehicle and instantly felt the frightening images start to recede. He wondered if memories could pout.

Thank god. Maybe some other day.

Kris joined him and pulled the door closed. “Adam, I know you’re nervous, but you have to believe
in yourself. I know you can do this, baby.”

“Not today I can’t. We’ll just come back tomorrow.” The salty air poked his brain, but the shame that he’d anticipated didn’t come. Instead, he felt pride at knowing how to protect himself without running away completely, something that he’d been working on with Sheila. Adam smiled at Kris. “It’s fine.”

“It’s not fine. Don’t let them win. You’re stronger than you think you are.”

“This isn’t about being strong, it’s about timing and being ready.” He couldn’t help that his tone was brisk.

Kris didn’t seem to be getting it. “But you said you were ready, and look at how amazing you’ve been doing!” he said, nodding enthusiastically. “Just give it a shot.”

Adam knew Kris was only trying to bolster his confidence, but that didn’t prevent a flood of irritation from ripping through the thin shield he’d been holding around himself, and with it came everything foul he’d just managed to subdue. “Jesus! Will you shut the fuck up! For god sakes! You don’t know…you don’t—”

He never saw Kris’ stunned expression. A blood curdling scream tore his throat. Arms and legs belonging to a terrified teenager thrashed about until they made contact with hard plastic, which his mind interpreted as fists and steel-toed boots.

Kris was plaintively yelling his name but Sam twisted the sounds into cruel words. “Faggot! I never loved you, you disgusting, fat freak! FREAK! FREAK! You like it, don’t you, you sick motherfucker!”

“Help me! Help…someone PLEASE HELP ME!”

“Be quiet you freak! Gary! Shove it down his throat. He’ll love it.”

“NO! NO! N—”

He was about to pass out from suffocation when a blaring noise shattered the scene and he found himself back in the car, Kris’ fist punching the horn on the steering wheel.

“Adam! Oh thank god!” Tears streamed unchecked down that beautiful face all contorted in fear and worry. “I’m so sorry! Shit! God, I’m so fucking sorry!”

Adam was a statue. He didn’t shake, cry or stutter. He couldn’t. The sheer number of emotions pummeling his body and mind made it impossible to do anything but blink and breathe. Kris continued to apologize for pushing him too hard and tried to hug his stone-like form. “Why aren’t you moving? Adam, baby, it’s gonna be all right, just…speak to me, yell at me…anything!”

In the next second, the ruinous chaos of pain, humiliation, shame, fear and anger was so overwhelming that Adam’s need for control became priority number one. Being vulnerable and week was unacceptable. Get it back! Have to fucking get it back! NOW. Statue morphed into animal with the speed of a boy escaping a gang of bullies and he launched at Kris; leapt across the console into the passenger seat and ruthlessly pinned his target beneath his body. Adam pulled the lever and slammed the seat back flat before literally tearing the shirt from Kris’ body.
His eyes saw only a means to an end, and the submissive cry of “yes!” from the rabbit’s mouth spurred him to greater heights of passion as he clamped onto a nipple and sucked it hard. “Fuck! Adam! More!”

Adam laughed without mirth, his hands flying at clothing and shoes until both men were naked and writhing on the sun-baked leather. “Oh I’ll give you more, you filthy devil. I’m gonna fuck you so hard…” He brought his palm down in a stinging slap to that delicious thigh and reveled in the resulting yelp. “You won’t even know your own name.”

No foreplay, no lube, no concern. The brunette was a willing toy and Adam just fucked the living shit out of it. His cock plundered, his nails dug and his teeth bit. “I’m in control. You’re mine…I fucking own you!” And although he made sure not to scratch or squeeze the toy’s right leg, in the moment he didn’t understand why. All Adam cared about was the sweet return of power that licked his neurons in a metaphysical orgy.

Kris’ jaw hung open, bursts of harsh cries fogging up the windows as his body responded to the hottest fuck in LA. He choked on his own drool, panted and begged for more. His toes didn’t curl - they fucking clenched right to the balls of his feet.

“That’s right, that’s fucking right! Feel it, feel my cock ripping you apart. Tell me you feel it. Tell me!”

“I f-feel it.”

“I can’t hear you, my hot little piece of ass, now say it like you fucking mean it!”

“Goddamnit Adam, I feel it! I feel it!”

Adam drew blood the next time his teeth sank into flesh and Kris pounded the roof with both fists, screaming and coming and jerking, his eyes rolling back so far that Adam saw white.

Somehow the sight of those fluttering eyelashes snapped Adam out of his power trip, and when he came, it was beautiful and horrible. The shout full of bliss was tainted with guilt. He did not move after collapsing except to weakly punch Kris’ chest and sob. “Why did you let me? I used you. Oh god, angel, I…I didn’t mean…I’m so sorry…why did you…fuck!” Feeling in control now, Lambert? Hmm? What a moron. Way to treat someone who loves you. User. Looser. Freak.

“It was hot.”

“W-what?” Adam looked up into Kris’ face and saw pleasure – soft, wide brown eyes all fucked out and a lazy grin – but also grief.

“Hot. I know I should’ve stopped you, but I didn’t want to and I’m sorry I wasn’t listening earlier but I’m not because you fucked me so hard but I am because you had a flashback. I feel like the worst person on earth.”

Insane. This is insane. It’s too much. Adam scrambled away, taking his clothes with him, and jumped out of the car completely naked. Passers by gawked but he didn’t fucking care. He pulled on his boxer briefs and jeans, kicked at a pebble and started yanking his hair in frustration. Kris likes it rough. Why are you so surprised? “That’s different!” he yelled at no one. “Giving it rough isn’t the same as using!”
“I know it isn’t.”

Adam whipped his head around in time to see Kris zipping up. “You weren’t supposed to let me! I wasn’t supposed to…we should never have come here. I told you I wasn’t ready!” He plopped down on the pavement next to the car. *It’s okay to be pissed at him. He deserves it, but so do you. I don’t care if he liked it…doesn’t change the fact that you used him like a drug, like a nameless whore.* Adam wished he could open a black hole and be swallowed up into nothingness. No pain. No feeling. *Where are those pretty recipe analogies now, Lambert? What a pity, you were doing so well and now look at you. Still the same damaged freak after all.*

He wept in shame and anger, but couldn’t resist the comforting arms that circled his shoulders. *I need him.*

Kris held him right there on the ground, both of them shirtless and barefoot. “I’m so sorry I didn’t listen when I should have. I don’t blame you for being mad. All this time I’ve tried to support you, to spare you from pain, and I fucked it up.” He sounded devastated.

“You believed in me.”

“I stepped over the line.”

“Yeah. And so did I.” *How are we gonna fix this?* “Kris, I want to go home now.”

“Okay.”

Five o’clock found them snuggled up on the couch, but they still hadn’t spoken a word to each other since leaving Santa Monica. The truth was that neither knew what to say plus they were damn tired, but it seemed like their bodies refused to be separated regardless of the awkward silence.

After an hour of this, Kris finally stirred. “I know what you’re thinking, and I’m here to tell you that it isn’t true. You’re not a damaged freak.”

“Mind reader are you?” Adam was more than weary of the old internal battle.

“I’m serious. Don’t you dare forget about that beautiful man in the mirror.”

A little smile tugged his mouth as he recalled the scene - Kris taking off his makeup, so loving and tender. “I’ll try not to.”

“And I’ll try, no, I promise to listen next time you say you’re not ready for something.”

“That would be good. I know it’s my responsibility not to use, but will you promise to push me away if I ever attempt it again?” Astoundingly, he felt Kris’ dick twitch against his outer thigh. *He’s turned on by it. Fuck.* Adam sat up and stared at his boyfriend’s blushing face. “We’re gonna have to do something about that. I mean I hope that I’m never tempted again, but it’s not helpful that you’re so eager for me to take advantage of you.” It was difficult to ignore the obvious sign of Kris’ arousal, but he did his best to concentrate on those conflicted eyes.

“I don’t want you to use me either, not really, even though it was ridiculously hot.”

“You like it when I don’t care about you? Kris, I don’t understand that at all.”
“Something about the risk.” Kris shuddered from head to toe. “Like the first time we met.”

Adam’s brows furrowed as he considered that maybe Kris felt their sex life was getting boring. *That can’t be true.* “You think…things are too predictable?”

“No no! That’s not what I meant!” His laughing face made Adam sigh in relief. “Are you kidding me? We have the hottest sex known to man! It’s just…the extra thrill I guess.”

*Now that I can relate to.* The excitement of the chase had always given Adam the most incredible hard ons. An unexpected idea suddenly hit him in the forehead - an idea so fresh, so fucking delectable that it swept away the events of the afternoon in a heartbeat. “Hmmm, maybe we can get creative. Ever hear of role playing?”

“Oh.my.shit.” Kris’ expression, half baby deer and half starving beast, was a very effective aphrodisiac.

They made plans.

***

On Saturday the couple spent time working on their apartment, unpacking any remaining boxes and decorating the walls. They were having a friendly argument about which photo to hang near the door when someone knocked on it. “Probably the mail,” said Adam. “Maybe one of us has a package or something.”

“I’ve got a package for you,” Kris teased. “Wanna open it?”

Giggling, Adam swatted him on the ass and pulled open the door. The person on the other side was the last one Adam expected to see. “Brian! Holy shit! What happened to you?” *Where the fuck has he been all this time?*

The boy looked a wreck, like he hadn’t showered in weeks. His clothes and face were covered in grime and god knows what else. Hazel eyes that had once sparkled now stared dully at Adam. “Help,” he mumbled, and then slumped to the ground, unconscious.

***

“There we go…okay, careful now.” *How the hell does he even know where I live? Probably stalked us.*

Adam and Kris hefted Brian’s dead weight between them and carried him to the couch, Adam cringing as he listened to his cousin mumble unintelligibly. *At least he regained consciousness…he sounds delirious though.* *What the fuck happened to him?* A myriad possibilities flashed through his brain, each more gruesome than the next. When the kid’s tall form was settled, the couple shared a meaningful look. There was no need to explain; they both knew Kris couldn’t stay while Brian was there.
“Call me when he’s gone,” said Kris, already headed for the door.

“You got it.” He watched his boyfriend leave, picked up the phone and turned back to Brian, who still had his eyes closed and was shifting restlessly. Adam knelt beside him. *He’s so thin. Probably hasn’t eaten in days.* He suddenly remembered Brian as a small boy, blond and grinning as he proudly wiggled a loose tooth. It sort of broke his heart.

While looking through his contacts for Aunt Lorraine’s number, he slapped Brian’s face lightly with his free hand until he saw those lackluster hazel eyes open and focus.

“Adam.” His voice was raw and scratchy like that of a man who’d been smoking for fifty years. When he noticed the phone, however, he yelped and batted it out of Adam’s fingers. “No! You can’t! No one can know I’m here!”

“But I have to tell your mom, she’s been worried sick! And I think you need medical attention.”

“No!” He tried to scramble up, but he was so weak that he barely made it off the couch and began to panic as he fell backwards. “Don’t tell…please…they’ll make me go to therapy!”

After all the help Sheila had given him, Adam couldn’t imagine why Brian looked so terrified at the idea. *Where would I be without her?* “You know, therapy isn’t a bad thing. It can really--”

“I’m not going! I don’t want to talk about--” He scrubbed his face and then curled up on the couch. “Nevermind, just don’t call her, I’m begging you,” he said with a sniffle. “Where’s Kris? Is he here?”

“No,” Adam growled, “and he won’t be until you’re gone.” Despite the sudden flare of irritation at Brian’s gall even when almost passed out with exhaustion and hunger, Adam still pitied him. *Can’t blame him for not wanting to talk about whatever happened to him. I never wanted to.* He went into the kitchen, ignoring his cousin’s mention of Kris and returned with water and a bowl of leftover pasta.

Brian sat up and inhaled the food in about five seconds, sucking in the strands of spaghetti so fast it was a wonder he didn’t choke on them. Adam couldn’t bear to see anyone starving, so he warmed up some lentil soup, too. “Lots of good protein,” he said as he watched the boy eat, “looks like you could use it. God, Brian, where the hell have you been the past two weeks?” But he didn’t get a response until another serving of soup was gone along with half a loaf of bread and a glass of juice.

“In an alley.” Brian wobbled like a well-fed puppy and blinked slowly.

“Jesus.” Adam could see it, his little cousin huddled in some dark corner at night with all the homeless people trying to survive, and the awful scene made him want to help more than was wise. *I have to call his mom. Mentoring is one thing, but I can’t get involved in this. Shit. He’ll probably run away again.* Gritting past his usual habit of absolute privacy, Adam decided to open up just a little in hopes that it would give Brian the right push. *He does seem to look up to me after all.* "You can go to therapy without saying anything. I did.”

Sleepy eyes popped open in obvious surprise. “You? You went to counseling?”

“Yes.”

Brian threw a calculating glance at him. “Why?”
“That’s none of your business, but let’s just say that I didn’t talk much at first.” That’s a fucking understatement. Adam snorted at the memory - weeks of silence during which Sheila did paperwork at her desk until he finally got sick of it and gave in. Even then they’d only discussed trivial things for many more sessions before he’d trusted her enough to talk about his trauma.

“Hmph.”

“Look, you’ve got two options,” said Adam as he sat down on the coffee table opposite his skeptical cousin. “You can live on the street and starve or you can go home and tolerate therapy. You don’t even have to like it.”

“I could stay here.” He actually seemed serious.

Adam barked out a laugh and stood so that he towered over Brian. “What, so you can hit on Kris all day? You must be fucking insane!” That did it. He’d had enough and it was time to take charge. “No, I’m going to call your mom and that’s final! You want to be like me? Then act like a man instead of a child! Face your problems and go to fucking therapy! If something happened to you, then you need to deal with it instead of hurting other people and that includes yourself goddamnit!”

Brian’s jaw hit the floor. “I…I…”

Adam didn’t wait for him to finish. He grabbed his phone and punched Aunt Lorraine’s number. Stupid ass kid. Attacking a student…running away and practically starving himself to death. After three rings she answered. “It’s Adam. Brian just showed up on my doorstep.” He waited for her cries of relief to subside before continuing. “He seems to be better now that he’s had some food, but he’s exhausted and probably dehydrated.” Adam made sure he had eye contact with his cousin when he said, “yes, he’s waiting for you to come get him. Do you know my new address?” He gave the information and hung up.

“But…”

“But nothing!” Adam yelled at Brian. “Control is not about manipulating people or letting your life go to shit!” He’d never envisioned giving a harsh lecture as part of mentoring, but he could tell it was working and only brought the volume down a hair to deliver the final message. “You’re going home and you’re going to get help before you do something that lands you in jail. Understand?”

The little boy with the loose tooth nodded slowly, his eyes cast downward. “Yes.”

“Good. Now lie down and rest until she gets here.” And with that, he walked into his bedroom and went right up to the full-length mirror. In his mind he saw Kris cleaning away the makeup and heard that sweet voice confirming what he’d been doubting recently.

I’m a good person. I’m a good role model. He thought about the horrible flashback yesterday, how hard he’d struggled not to beat himself up about it and the way he’d treated Kris afterward. So what if I had a relapse? It’s not the end of the world and it doesn’t take away from my progress. Kris still loves me. I’m still kicking ass. A few seconds passed in which he waited to be taunted by internal messages telling him he was a failure, but they didn’t come. “Ha! Take that, you fuckers!” Like stubborn weeds that refused to lie down and die, Adam knew they weren’t gone forever, but the reprieve was still damn nice.

Brian was fast asleep when Adam returned to the living room with a face full of confidence.
In twenty minutes Aunt Lorraine arrived and started hauling Brian off by the ear, but not before Adam made him promise to meet up next week at the coffee shop. “We’re not done with this mentoring thing, and I want to hear that you’ve attended a therapy session by then.”

The teenager cringed and mumbled “fine.”

“Thank you, Adam dear,” said Lorraine. “You’re an angel. I can’t tell you…” She dabbed at her eyes a few times with the edge of her sleeve. “Anyway, let’s go, Brian. We’ve got to contact your probation officer and hope that he’s merciful. I’m sure it’ll help if you tell him you’ve decided to cooperate with therapy.” She smiled gratefully at Adam and left with her son.

Adam wasted no time in calling Kris and telling him to get his ass home so he could spank it. Yeah, he felt like a cocky son of a bitch alright and everyone could just fucking deal with it.

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“You know what goes right here next to the door? Not a photo or a painting, but your gorgeous body.” Adam slammed his lover into the wall so hard that Kris gasped and coughed a few times. The fiery confidence licking his insides felt like he’d downed a bottle of Viagra.

“Shit! But…what happened with Brian?”

“I convinced him to go home and give therapy a try,” Adam chuckled. “But you can praise me later for that. Right now it’s time for fucking. Turn around.”

Frames rattled on their hooks, precum slicked the entryway floor and the porch light flickered on and off as Kris scrabbled for something to hold onto. This was about joy. Pure, unadulterated happiness that gushed from Adam’s body in frantic, pulsing waves, drowning the man in front of him with every thrust. After coming so hard he could barely see straight, Adam gripped Kris’ perfectly shaped dick and pumped it with the last of his energy.

“Fuck! Adam!” Thick white ropes painted the wall and then the two men collapsed to the floor still half-clothed and dripping with sweat.

“What the hell…got in to you?” Kris panted, his chest heaving up and down like he’d just run a marathon.

Adam’s lungs were also working overtime. “Oh let’s just say that I’m feeling…pretty fucking…good about myself.”

“Damn. I’ll take some more of that, please!”

Adam laughed loudly and crushed Kris to his body. “Give me a minute to recover and you’re on.”

Just then Fifi, who’d been sulking in a corner after being ignored for so long, trotted over and looked at them sadly.

“Awww, feeling abandoned, girl?” Adam cooed as he reached out to pet her. “Maybe we should go
get you that new traveling sling today. Wanna go for a walk?” Her smooth skin seemed to vibrate at these words and her tail went crazy. “I’ll take that as a yes.” The cutest little pout formed on Kris’ face and Adam felt his heart beating out a steady rhythm of ‘I love you, I love you, I love you.’

“But what about round two?”

“Mmm, later when I get home from work.”

“Promise?”

“Hell yeah. Now come on, let’s get that leg of yours in shape again.”

They drove to the pet store, parked and took a little walk up and down the block before entering the shop. Fifi didn’t pull on the leash anymore except for when they went past her favorite thing to sniff: golden poppies. For some reason she couldn’t seem to get enough of the mild smelling flowers and attempted to push her tiny nose into every blossom she saw. “Maybe she’s trying to get high,” said Adam as he steered her away from yet another group of them arranged under a tree.

“That’s just what we need,” Kris laughed, “a drugged out puppy.”

Jen was thrilled to see Fifi again and put down her pricing gun to pet and fawn over the little one. “So, looking for a carrier?”

“Yeah, the backpack just isn’t working,” said Kris. “We need something more practical.”

“It’s too big for her and not nearly fashionable enough,” Adam added with a bright smile.

“Oh boy,” Jen chuckled. “As much as I’d love your business, I think you guys should take Fifi to Healthy Spot. It’s a specialty store just for dogs. I know they’d have what you’re looking for and last time I was in there I saw the most adorable pink hoodie! Plus they’ve got all natural food and treats and—” She halted abruptly when the store manager came into view. “Dang, hope he didn’t hear me. I’d get in so much trouble if he knew that I shop somewhere else,” she giggled.

_Pink hoodie? Natural food? Yes!_ “How do we get there?” squeaked Adam, unable to stop himself from clapping a little in excitement.

“Oh lordy, why do I have the feeling we’re about to spend a shitload of money on dog accessories,” Kris groaned.

Adam skipped back to the car with Fifi tagging along behind him, the heels of his fierce black boots scuffing the ground as he went. He’d had a stressful couple of days and a shopping spree was just what the doctor ordered. “I’m gonna get you the cutest little outfit! And maybe a new collar and they better have a carrier that sparkles somehow!”

Healthy Spot was indeed a bastion of doggie bliss. From the moment the trio walked in they were all treated like special guests, and Fifi even got a free handful of peanut butter flavored treats. She scarfed them down with relish and did the puppy equivalent of a happy dance. Kris’ mouth was hanging open. “Oh my god. It’s like Whole Foods meets Hot Topic for dogs!”

“Weeee! Come on!” Adam grabbed his hand and headed right for the clothing section. “Look! It’s the pink hoodie Jen was talking about and it says ‘Angel’ on it! We are SO getting that!” Shopping for Fifi turned out to be just as much fun as shopping for himself. Part of the joy was due to the
permanent look of disbelief of Kris’ face at how many different outfits lined the walls, the sheer number of glittering collars and what seemed like a hundred pairs of doggie sunglasses on display in every corner of the store.

Fifi met plenty of new friends, both human and canine, as they filled the two hemp-made bags that Healthy Spot handed out to customers instead of plastic baskets. “What’s wrong with the food we have at home?” asked Kris when Adam shoved a bag of Evo Small Bites into his arms.

“This stuff is all natural! It’s based on raw food diets. See, look right here, it says it ‘contains health promoting phytochemicals and micronutrients.’”

Kris stared at him. “What the hell does that even mean?”

“That’s it’s good for her! You want Fifi to be healthy, don’t you?”

“But it’s seventeen dollars for a thirteen pound bag! It’d be cheaper if you just made her food yourself,” laughed Kris.

“Well until that day comes, we’re getting this.”

Fifi made out like a bandit and Kris stopped complaining when Adam said he’d pay for it all on his gold card. “And no arguing. I can afford it. Oooh, there’s a jewelry section!” After an hour Fifi had four new outfits (not including the pink angel hoodie), a studded purple leather collar with a tiny Xolo pendant attached to it, brown and pink ceramic bowls that said ‘woof’ on them, the fancy Evo food, two bags of treats, a bunch of toys and the reason they’d gone shopping in the first place: a new carrier called the Dog Sling Snuggle Up Princess Fifi, which was almost too perfect to be real.

“You’re gonna ride in style now, girl! You can stand or lay down in it and it’s got pockets on the outside for your leash and some treats.” *I bet I could glue gun some rhinestones on it to spell out her name.*

“I’ve got to hand it to Jen,” said Kris as they loaded up the car, “this place is unreal. Talk about spoiling a dog! I can only imagine what it’s going to be like when we have kids.”

At the mention of children Adam stopped in his tracks, the smile on his face growing ten times bigger. *I’ll be a dad someday! Sure you can handle that, Lambert? You might mess them up. What? Where the fuck did you come from? Of course I can handle it, now get the fuck out of my head!* He pulled Kris into his arms and kissed the living daylights out of him.

It was mayhem when they got home. Adam was in full childhood regression and romped around the house with Fifi for so long that he almost forgot about getting ready for work. Kris, meanwhile, laughed to the point of tears and only stopped when he decided to try sketching the playful pair. All in all, their spirits were ridiculously high by the time they headed out to the club. Matt and Alisan were due to meet up with them there for dinner before Adam’s set.

“Maybe I can try dancing tonight after you perform. My leg is feeling pretty good.”

“Hmmm, well just remember what the doctor said and don’t push yourself, angel.”

“Yes, mommie, I promise to be a good boy.”

Adam spanked him several times for his cheek as they made their way to the club entrance. He didn’t
notice the group of hot young girls hovering nearby until one of them squealed rather loudly.

“Look! It’s Adam Lambert!” This proclamation set off a whole chorus of excited babbling. “Go ask him for his autograph!” “No, you do it, I’m too nervous! “Oh my god, he’s sooo gorgeous!” “Those eyes!” “I love his hair, how does he get it to look like he’s just been fucked?” “Why does he have to be gay, it’s so unfair!” “Did you see him perform last weekend? Unbelievable! Who sings like that?” “I know, right? It’s like…just…wow.” “Go on, Cindy, ask him! Get him to sign your boob!” “No way! You do it!”

Adam was hard pressed not to laugh his ass off like Kris had started doing when they heard the gossiping gaggle of girls. They didn’t bother him and it was kind of cute and flattering. He tried to remain composed when the girl named Cindy got pushed by her friends and stumbled up to him completely red-faced. Kris had managed to stifle his guffaws.

“H-hi! Um…errr, could I…oh my god I don’t even have a pen! I mean could you…” She glanced over at the other girls and waved her hands frantically until one of them hurled a Sharpie at her. She held it out to Adam with a nervous giggle. “M-maybe my hand?”

“Not your boob?” teased Adam, chuckling at Cindy’s shocked expression.

“Oh my god! She was kidding! I mean no you don’t have to….shit.”

“Calm down and give me your hand, sweetie. I’m just messing with you.” He signed her shaking palm, grinning from ear to ear at the tantalizing idea of fame and fortune.

“Th-thank you! Um, you’re really great!” Cindy gulped and ran back to her circle of jealous friends. “He called me sweetie! Did you hear that?”

“Come on, babe,” Adam said to Kris, “let’s go in before I get mobbed.”

“Oh please, there’s no one else even out here, mister ego!”

Despite his smug attitude and no matter how often it happened these days, Adam still wasn’t prepared for the guys who accosted him once he was inside the club. He had to rely heavily on Kris and thankfully Matt and Alisan came rushing over to help form a human shield around him. “Damn!” Matt shouted above the noise, “you’re going to need a real bodyguard soon!”

“He’s sooo gorgeous!” Kris tittered, parroting the girls outside.

“Shut up, you!” chortled Adam.

They settled into their customary booth at the back and Adam took up his position between Kris and Alisan. It works. I’ll get better at this. Just got to get used to it is all. There’s no shame in that, right? For a while, dinner was a busy affair with all the fans coming up to their table, but Kris and Matt were very good bouncers and soon people left Adam alone to eat in peace.

“I told you, puppy! Didn’t I always say that you’d be famous?”

Adam smiled at his best friend and gave her a big kiss on the cheek. “You sure have. Still, you’d think that I would’ve heard back from my contact at RCA by now. Wonder what’s taking them so long?”
“Maybe they’re still so stunned at how amazing it is that they don’t know what to do with
themselves,” Kris suggested playfully as he munched on a burger.

“Haha. Well if I don’t hear by Monday I’m going to give them a call.”

“Sounds like a good plan,” said Matt. “You deserve to be signed, man. Really, your music is the
shit.”

“Thanks!”

The two men shared a genuine smile and Adam felt something akin to love but not quite, like a
giggle of the heart instead of a breathless stutter. It was familiar; he remembered it from way back in
high school. How about that? I have an honest to goodness male friend! Awesome. “Drinks are on
me tonight! What’ll ya have, Matt?”

At nine o’clock sharp, Adam took the stage and gave a truly spectacular show. His tighter than tight
black pants, so similar to the old sex pants but without the hidden clasps, accentuated every salacious
line as he danced and belted out pitch-perfect notes. Glittering eyes seduced the crowd, making every
person feel special and wanted, and when he threw in a few extra hip rolls just for Kris, the girls and
boys cheered with glee. I was born to do this. I’m going to make it. Somehow.

But thirty seconds into his last number, Adam saw something that almost made him stop singing.
Tommy, his colleague at Sew Your Soul, had just sat down in their booth along with a girl who had
to be Megan.

Shit.

Work was a controlled scenario. There were rules and boundaries, but this…
Adam could only hope that the pair would leave before he returned to the table. Every second that
passed while he continued to perform made him increasingly nervous because Kris, Matt and Alisan
appeared to be enjoying the company of the new arrivals quite a bit. Kris will help, he understands.
He’ll make sure they leave. Nice, Lambert, real nice. Tommy’s an okay guy, you said so yourself.
Yeah, but… But what? You want more friends, don’t you? Why push away someone so easy going,
someone who already knows you at some level?

Adam wrestled with himself for the entire song and as he bowed to the enthusiastic applause, he still
hadn’t made up his mind. Fuck. Fuckity fuck fuck. He left the stage. Fuck. Walked toward the table.
Damn. Ignored the people asking for his autograph. Shit. Saw Tommy and Megan standing up!
Thank god! Watched them start to move away. No…wait. Torn but determined not to be a coward,
Adam called out, “Hey guys, leaving so soon?”

He’d obviously surprised Tommy, not to mention the rest of the group who all stared at him like he’d
started wearing plaid shirts. “What? Oh, um, not if you don’t want us to, I guess.”

I do. No, I don’t. Ah shit. Go for the easy stuff first. “This must be Megan.” He turned to the young
woman. Tall, blonde and gorgeous with most of her right arm covered in a sleeve of tattoos, Adam
immediately saw why Tommy had been so attracted to her. “Tommy talks about you all the time.”

“Does he now?” she chirped, holding out her hand for Adam to shake while winking at her
boyfriend. “Well he speaks quite highly of you, too.” Adam’s eyes went seriously wide. “Says
you’ve got a gift for design but jesus, he didn’t tell me you could sing like that! You’re incredible!”

“I’ve never seen him perform before, Meg. I really hope you don’t mind that I’m here, Adam. Matt
just kept going on about your show and I--”

“It’s fine, really. Um, so…” He played with the zipper on his leather jacket. “We’re going to hang
out and have some drinks. You and Megan want to join us?” Several gasps met his ears.

“We’d love to!” said Megan. “Right, Tommy?”

“You sure you’re okay with that?”

Adam nodded.

“Alright then. Do they have tacos here?”

“Christ, are you always hungry?”

“Pretty much,” Tommy laughed.

Where the hell does he put it all? “There’s a menu you can look at. Just, ah, let me get in first, okay?” I’ll be between Kris and Ali. I can talk to Megan and everyone else. I’ve got to get used to this. He hoped that no one would make a big deal, especially in front of Megan who probably had no idea how hard it was for him to socialize with men. He needn’t have worried. Like true friends, Kris, Matt and Alisan behaved as if Adam did this all the time. The only exception was a quick glance full to the brim with doting pride from Kris and the two warm hands squeezing each of his. God bless Kris and Ali.

Megan, it turned out, was very outgoing but not to the point where it was annoying. She chatted easily with everyone while sipping on her gin and tonic and struck up a conversation with Adam about his thoughts on her outfit. After a while he started to relax, the hard coil of tension unwinding just a tad, and pulled his hands away from his support system. No more alcohol for me tonight though. I need to keep my wits.

A heated debate about the ethics of online music sharing sprung up between Kris, Alisan, Matt and Tommy and Adam caught a few of the finer points. He happened to have a very strong opinion on the matter, and after Tommy said “but what about people who can’t afford to buy CDs?” he couldn’t resist joining in.

“I feel for them, honestly, but it’s not fair to the artists.” Everyone looked at him and he tried not to let his confidence falter. “It’s cheating, and songs are only a dollar on iTunes anyway.”

“I know,” said Tommy gently, “but not everyone can scrape together even that much and you have to own some kind of credit or debit card to purchase them. It’s not like you can pay with the change you dig up from your couch.” He flushed pink and something told Adam that’d he’d suffered from poverty in the past.

Huh. Hadn’t thought about that. Money was never a problem for Adam with his family being so well off. “That’s a good point. Well maybe the real issue is poverty then.” To his utter amazement, Adam found himself deep in discussion with Tommy as the night wore on. Looking at that cute face didn’t hurt either. He even asked after Tommy’s father and was relieved to hear that the man had recovered from his heart attack. However, in all of his delight at successfully socializing, he failed to notice that someone was distinctly unhappy. It took a sharp dig to his ribs for Adam tear his eyes away from Tommy.

“What, Kris?”

The frowning man leaned over and whispered harshly into his ear. “You remember that role play we
talked about yesterday? We are doing that. Soon.”

_Holy shit, he’s jealous! But Tommy is straight, why would he be? Maybe, Lambert, it’s because you haven’t paid any attention to him whatsoever since you sat down? Oh._ Adam made a point to keep his hand on Kris’ crotch for the rest of the evening and did not ignore him again.

He was rewarded nicely when they got home.
Chapter 5

Kris had expected to be background music for all of the chatting, texting and studying college students, so he wasn’t surprised when the first half of his first song was drowned out by noise. By the time ‘Apologize’ had launched him into a world of remembered heartbreak, however, only murmurs accompanied the muffled whirring of the espresso machine on the other side of the café. He beamed to the applause afterwards and from then on most of the students paid more attention to him than to their cell phones; even those who chose to study during his songs stopped to clap at the end. When Kris took breaks normal activity resumed, but the moment he returned to the stage the volume went down to a low buzz again.

As the afternoon wore on a steady stream of people flowed in and out the café, newcomers catching the mood and stifling their laughter at the door while those exiting made sure not to clatter their empty coffee mugs too loudly in the brown tubs near the trash can. More than once the phrase, “dammit, I’m gonna be late for class!” was whispered forcefully, its speaker standing glued to the floor listening to Ground Zero’s newest treat.

Although he was a bit nervous at first Kris soon remembered that he felt comfortable up on stage, the place he belonged most in the world. (Well, it was a close second to Adam’s arms anyway.) Singing and playing the guitar had always been more about sharing than performing, as if he were opening the cover of the Kris-book and allowing the audience to flip through its pages. Sometimes the perusing halted at a soulful glance into his heart while at other times, a feel good number came blasting out of nowhere to catch the reader by surprise. Yeah, this Kris Allen guy was a damn good story, one made even better by the layer of confidence that’d grown in over the past year.

Kris decided to finish the day on an upbeat note with one of the songs from his demo, Live Like We’re Dying. It was a crazy hit and his enthusiasm was so infectious that hardly anyone could contain their grins, right down to the barista making her hundredth latte and smiling as she moved the frothing pitcher in time to the beat. As he looked out over the responsive crowd, Kris kept repeating the same thing in his head. This is me! This is what I do!

Mere seconds following the raucous cheering and wolf whistles, a student walked right up to the stage and winked at him. Kris froze, caught off guard by the green cat-like eyes that felt like they were undressing him. After an embarrassingly long time, the young woman finally cleared her throat to get his attention. He blinked and felt heat rising to his cheeks.

Real smooth, Kris.

“Your performance was hot,” she said in a voice that went with her eyes, her delicate fingers curled around a little piece of paper. “And so are you. Call me sometime.”

“Oh, um thank you,” he responded, looking at the offered phone number like it was a dangerous object. “I mean thanks for the compliment…about my music that is.” He scratched the back of his neck. “I have a boyfriend though, so…yeah.” Whatever happened to growing a pair?

“Damn. The best ones are always gay,” she sighed, a pout-like smirk twisting those full lips, and her tone shifted from flirty to friendly. “Should’ve known. Guess I’ll have to settle for being a groupie.
Will you be here tomorrow, too?"

“No actually I have Tuesdays off, but I’ll be back on Wednesday and for the rest of the week from eleven to five.” He relaxed a little now that she was behaving less like a seductress.

“Fantastic. I get out of Bio at three on Wednesday and I’ll bring some friends.” Her lithe form drifted away and he couldn’t help but notice that her jeans were nearly identical to the pair Adam had worn yesterday. He looks ten times sexier in girls pants though. Kris giggled inwardly and continued to pack up his guitar amidst the blue, red, yellow and green lights creating a rainbow effect on the back curtain. He finished and left the stage just in time to greet Kathryn, the manager of Ground Zero.

“I knew there was a reason I hired Ray, he’s got an excellent eye for talent. Well done, Kris. I expect this place to be packed by the end of the week and thanks to you I could actually hear myself think today!” She rubbed her hands together, flashed a broad smile and wished him good evening.

Yes! More exposure! Excitement shot through his veins at the thought of getting signed, hopefully soon. Gone were his tie-selling days, much to the chagrin of his boss at Macy’s, because playing the café would just about cover the bills. If he had to skimp on a few extras here and there, well it was worth it. Besides, Adam would die before letting me live on mac and cheese and ramen noodles. It was sort of cute how Adam fussed over him when it came to food, and as long as Kris’ preferences were respected he didn’t mind. Just wish he’d stop huffing when I fold laundry the ‘wrong’ way. Honestly, who cares if the towel edges don’t line up? He left the café and turned on his cell phone so he could call Adam to brag about his first day on the new job.

There were about ten text messages waiting for him, all from Adam. Kris made a huge effort not to panic immediately when he read the first one: ‘AHhhhhhhhh!!!! OMGGGGG!!’ and quickly moved onto the next: ‘I GOT SIGNED!’

“Holy shit!” Kris yelled in glee. It’s about time! The rest of the messages were just as hysterically joyful.

‘Can u believe this!? RCA JUST CALLED ME!’

‘FUCK! I’m gonna make a record! YESSS!’

‘I think I’m scaring Fifi.’

‘WHY ARE U STILL AT WORK :( ’

‘Introducing Adam Lambert, recording artist and international star!!’

‘Kissy kissy I love Krissy!’

He burst into laughter imagining Adam bouncing around the house like an overexcited child.

‘We should go Paris to celebrate when we’re both signed, don’t u think?? Bet u look hot in a beret.’

There was one more message. ‘How about u skip ur class 2nite ;)’

The virtual giddiness was contagious and Kris felt like his somersaulting heart was about to tumble right out of his chest. Awesome! I should take him out on a proper date to celebrate…so proud of him! Since he was ahead of schedule on his final project for music theory, Kris knew it wouldn’t hurt...
to miss another boring lecture even though graduation was only a month away. While standing there with a dopey grin on his face, Adam texted him again: ‘it’s after 5! u better be on ur way home!’

Kris jumped like he’d been scolded in person then laughed at himself as he typed a reply: ‘i’ll be there soon. get dressed up babe, i’m taking u out! btw, U KICK ASS!!! love u’ He made his way to the car, wracking his brain as he went for the best place to take Adam that wouldn’t break his wallet. I could always use my credit card...this isn’t a frivolous expense. His phone rang the moment he was about to start the engine.

“Well hey there, my gorgeous rock star!”

“You’re taking me out? Where are we going? What should I wear? Oh my god Kris! I still can’t believe it! Can you?”

“Of course I can! You totally deserve this! You’re mad talented and soon everyone in the world is gonna know it!”

There was a brief pause in which the only sounds were giddy breaths coming from both men, the air pulsing with excitement as if it knew that the future of entertainment would never be the same after Kris and Adam crashed onto the scene.

“Now go jump in the shower and get ready.” Adam generally needed way more time to put himself together than Kris did.

“Details, angel! How am I supposed to get ready if I don’t know--”

“Fancy dinner and then a hot night of dancing and drooling all over each other.”

A high-pitched squeal met his ears.

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Kris was trying really, really hard to feel like he belonged at Lucques, a top tier restaurant famous for its atmosphere and fresh, healthy ingredients. Coming from a family of humble means made it difficult, however, so instead he focused on the fact that he definitely belonged on Adam’s arm. Adam, lit up from head to toe in a grin and an outfit to match, glowed with confidence that seemed to radiate from his very core. Kris’ breath caught in his throat for the tenth time since he saw his boyfriend emerge from the bathroom earlier that evening. Only he can make a hot pink tie look sexy.

Set against a dark gray, long sleeved shirt with silver cuff links and a black vest, the tie might’ve been headache material but somehow it worked. Actually, considering that Adam had arranged it to hang below the vest and brush his man-sized bulge, one could say that the tie more than worked. Skinny black pants that flared just a bit from the knees, even dressier due to their satin lined pockets, and Kris’ favorite pair of boots (because he was special enough to know that the soles were starting to peel) completed the package. “You look so incredible,” said Kris, again.

“Are you kidding? I was just thinking the same thing about you,” Adam said as they approached the friendly looking hostess. “You, my sexy angel, are my trophy man.”
Kris heard the sincerity in Adam’s voice and even if he didn’t believe that about himself, Adam clearly did. He thrust out his chest a little and beamed at his lover. “We make a hot pair.” *It helps that I let him dress me.* The hunter green button down, opened to expose a good deal of skin, went perfectly with his ass hugging navy jeans and Apache cowboy boots. There was more gel in his hair than he usually liked, but Adam’s massaging fingers had felt so good that he didn’t really give a damn.

“Yes we do, baby.”

“Excuse me, sirs? Would you like to be seated?”

The couple shook the hearts out of their eyes so they could see where the hostess was leading them. Entering the back patio of Lucques felt like walking into a park where volunteers had planted a group of saplings just in time for a banquet. Soft candlelight flickered on each table, casting dancing shadows on the surrounding trees, adobe walls and pristinely white tablecloths. Both Kris and Adam had slightly wide eyes as they took their seats under a young leafy tree.

“Wow.”

“Yeah.” *This is the kind of place I can imagine proposing to him.* One of those whole body shivers dashed across Kris’ skin, and in that moment he was absolutely positive it would happen some day. *I will ask him to marry me…I will.*

“Kris? Something wrong?”

He glanced up to see Adam staring at him with furrowed brows. “No, everything’s perfect. Just…I love you so much.” They joined hands across the table because the moment called for nothing less. “And I’m so proud of you. I know you’re gonna take the world by storm and…god look at me, starting to blubber,” he chuckled weakly, trying to hold back the tears suddenly threatening to burst forth.

“Hey now, what’s all this?” Adam squeezed Kris’ hands and then kissed them gently, his soft lips sending another shudder up and down Kris’ spine.

It was hard to explain, but Kris was going to do his best to try. Adam deserved to understand the depth of his devotion and gratitude. He opened his mouth but closed it again when a waiter stopped at their table, introduced himself as Lance and asked for their drink orders. Adam’s fingers tensed just a fraction at the sight of the young man and his open smile. “We’ll have a bottle of your very best Chardonnay,” Kris said without looking away from Adam’s slightly troubled eyes.

“Austria’s Morillon Trocken 2008 was the gold medal winner of the Chardonnay-du-Monde this year. I’m sure you’ll find it to your liking.”

Kris had no idea what all that meant, but Adam grinned and seemed to relax as if remembering they were at a fine restaurant with non-threatening servers getting paid to cater to his every whim. “Thank you,” Adam said to the waiter. “I hear the du-Monde was a close competition this time around.”

“Indeed it was,” Lance replied, looking impressed. It was times like these that Kris felt self-conscious about his ignorance of the high life. Hell, he didn’t even know if his favorite beer had won any awards. *Amazing that I ended up with someone from a rich family. I wonder if he’s ever embarrassed by me.* He waited until Lance left before trying to express himself again, glad that his hands were still covered by Adam’s.
“Before I met you I spent most of my life trying to make other people happy. I even remember worrying that my own brother wouldn’t like me unless I let him have his way…so stupid.”

“Kris--”

“No, let me finish, please.” Adam nodded and he continued. “You saw my tree house, you’ve met my grandma and you know about Ethan…the way I let him treat me.” Kris sighed, looking at the love of his life and that heart-stopping face which was concentrating on his every word. “But I’m different now and it’s because of you. I mean, I’m not saying that you waved a magic wand and fixed me, but you made it possible for me to fix myself. Always encouraging me to be myself, not to take shit from anyone including you… and loving me, always loving me no matter what.” A soft breeze caught the leaves above their table and the rustling sound was so peaceful, just the way it felt to be loved unconditionally. “It’s like I never have to worry if I’m not perfect. I can relax. I can figure out what makes me happy for once. Do you have any idea how incredible that is?”

Adam’s eyes twinkled with…something. Was it happiness, understanding, pain? “In a way, angel, I do. I don’t have your history, but I know that you love me despite all my flaws. It wasn’t too long ago that I thought you’d leave me every time I behaved like a damag-- I mean, every time I have difficulty with something. But now I get it...you’re here to stay. You accept all of me. It’s the greatest gift…makes me feel like there’s a chance I’ll accept all of myself some day.”

A meaningful silence settled over the pair, each man feeling understood by the other. Many tables were occupied that night, but for Adam and Kris only theirs existed. On a nearby branch sat a yellow warbler greeting the evening with sweet song or perhaps, not being as lucky as the couple below, pining for a mate. Soon Lance returned, but he wisely did not interrupt the two men speaking volumes with their eyes as he poured a little wine into Adam’s glass.

“Excellent,” said Adam after tasting it. “Please continue and then recommend a few entrees.”

Kris could imagine Eber saying those same words while his son took mental notes. He was raised for this lifestyle. Fame will suit him. Still caught up in the romance, he half listened to the waiter and heard himself agree with Adam that the Alaskan black cod with artichokes barigoule (whatever that was), chickpeas, olives and crumbled feta sounded like the perfect meal for him. Suddenly Kris knew it didn’t matter that his family was poor in comparison to Adam’s, because the entire Lambert clan was nothing if not the most loving bunch of people he’d ever met. And so are my folks and Danny. That’s what counts.

When Adam had finished ordering for them, the right words were sitting on Kris’ tongue. “You’re going to be a star, not just because of your ridiculous talent though. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone more determined to overcome obstacles. Look at how far you’ve come! Nothing is going to stand in the way of what you want out of life. And before you know it, the sweet, caring person that’s always been inside you is going to bust out in public and everyone will see what an incredible, sexy, fierce and loving man you are!” He raised his glass. “To you, baby. Congratulations on getting signed. The world isn’t gonna know what hit it.”

Adam’s way of accepting the toast was to stand up, walk around to Kris and pull him into a deep, passionate kiss. On and on their tongues and lips continued the conversation until they were in danger of forgetting about dinner altogether. It was the yellow bird darting past their joined bodies that helped them remember they were in public, and therefore it would be in poor taste to start ripping each other’s clothes off.
They spent the meal playing footsie and talking as if they’d been friends forever. From the reasons why Kris really liked football to Adam’s childhood cooking stories to how they fell in love with music. As the patio lights went on and the night settled in, Kris basked in his and Adam’s similarities as well as their differences.

Oh yeah, and the artichokes barigoule was really damn good.

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“Have I ever told you how fuckable you look in cowboy boots?” Adam said into Kris’ ear over the thumpa thumpa of the club music.

Kris giggled and continued to writhe against Adam’s hot body. “Only every time I wear them!”

For a Monday night the dance floor was unusually crowded, but Kris didn’t mind because it just made it easier for the couple to stay plastered together. They were both hard. Let’s see how crazy I can make him. Kris turned around and grabbed Adam’s hands to the front of his thighs. “Squeeze them,” he demanded as his head lolled back onto Adam’s shoulder.

“Fuck…you bad boy,” Adam moaned.

“Mmmm.” Kris threw his arms backwards around his boyfriend’s neck and began to circle his ass, grinding it into Adam’s cock again and again. “So hot for you. Touch me.” The black tipped fingers moved closer, massaging flesh on their way to Kris’ pulsing length. “Feel it, baby…so hard for you,” he taunted.

Adam let out a growl the moment his hands made contact, but it quickly turned into a whine when Kris started sucking on his earlobe. “Angel…oh god, you…shit.” The husky tone in Adam’s voice made it clear that his eyes were rolling back in pleasure.

Yessss. As fantastic as it felt to be fondled in the middle of a crowd, Kris had other plans for this erotic dance. Without looking where he was going he began walking backwards, pushing a nearly incoherent Adam through the masses of people until a wall stopped their progress. It was dark on the sidelines, too dark for anyone to notice when Kris bent forward slightly, placed his hands on his upper thighs and brought Adam to a shuddering orgasm in under a minute. He knew he’d have bruises on his hips in the morning and the new hickey would need plenty of cover-up, but fuck was it worth it.

Boneless and panting, Adam shoved his hand down the front of Kris’ jeans and brought him off with only a few strokes. The pounding music was too steady for his wildly beating heart or the frantic way he and Adam kissed as they danced the night away.

At midnight they drove home and made love under the hot spray of the shower before falling asleep in each other’s arms. Just as Kris was drifting off he muttered, “You’ll be a legend.”

He had a weird dream about wearing that gold jacket on display at Sew Your Soul.
The week passed in a flurry of activity. Both men were now working during the days, but on top of that Adam had several evening meetings with RCA to negotiate the details of his contract, plus he had therapy and a mentoring session with Brian that week. Thankfully the kid showed up reporting that he’d attended a counseling session that was ‘stupid and a waste of time, but at least I went.’ For Kris’ part, he was trying to pick up the slack with cleaning and cooking and although his meals were passable at best, Adam never failed to express appreciation for them.

By the time the couple was unceremoniously dumped into the weekend, it felt good to lie in bed all Saturday morning. “I’ve missed you.”

“Me too, angel.”

They cuddled together for a while just enjoying the peace and quiet. “You think Mrs. Stebbins would mind if we installed a doggie door for Fifi?” he asked as he nuzzled Adam’s bare chest. He’d been up earlier to take care of their puppy before climbing back into the warm bed where Adam was still sleeping deeply. After a long night of performing and dealing with fans at the club, the poor man had nearly collapsed in exhaustion when they got home.

“Hmm, well we could ask, although I’d be worried about her getting sunburned or hurt while we’re gone. Hell, she’d probably try to wiggle under the fence to get at that pesky squirrel who’s been tormenting her lately.”

Kris chuckled. “True. Actually we might need to do something about that. I saw her digging the other day and she’s pretty damn smart. She could find a way out if she really wanted to.”

“Really? Shit, too clever for your own good, aren’t you girl?” He reached down and pet the pup who was curled up next to his side.

“Tell me about it. Well we could always line the fence with some big rocks…bury them half way. That should stop her.”

“Mhmm.” Adam yawned and started trailing his fingers up and down Kris’ back. The snuggly trio eventually fell asleep again until about noon when their tummies grumbled and demanded that they get up to eat something. After finishing off a plate of goat cheese and prosciutto sandwiches, Kris hopped into the shower and got ready to leave the apartment.

“So how long you gonna be gone?” Adam asked as he stripped off his pajama pants.

“About an hour. Shouldn’t take me too long to find what I need.” He’d led Adam to believe he was going to stock up on guitar strings and staff paper, which couldn’t be further from the truth. “Damn, you better get in the bathroom quick before I change my mind about going,” he said, raking his eyes over that naked, luscious body.

Adam winked and stroked himself a few times before sauntering out of the bedroom with his hips swaying. “See you laterrrrr.”

“Punk!”

“You know you love me!”
It was the perfect day for a long walk downtown and if Kris hadn’t been so focused, he would’ve liked to stroll and people watch. As it was, he had to pay careful attention not to miss the unmarked building of the adult store where he’d purchased the ‘dice’ before traveling to Arkansas for Christmas. As he entered the shop with its blacked out windows, the thrill was palpable. He’d been waiting a whole week to come here again. *Can’t believe it. God, this is gonna be so incredible!*  

He walked past the toys, lubes and massage oils to the porn section where row upon row of glossy DVDs beckoned from the wire shelves. During his first visit, Kris had been amazed to discover how many gay films there were compared to the stores in Conway. He’d spent an entire evening while Adam was working just looking at them all before finally stumbling upon the ingenious dice. *But this will be way better than playing with dice.* He stopped in the middle of an aisle right in front of ‘Fantasy Room’ and licked his lips, his jeans becoming impossibly tighter as he stared at the tantalizing bondage scenes on the case. *Fuck.*  

His calloused fingers shook a little as he picked up the DVD. The anticipation seemed to be suffocating him, stealing the breath from his very lungs, but he’d obviously chosen the wrong film. He reached for ‘Bound and Beaten’ next. No joy. After trying five more cases, Kris started to wonder if something had gone wrong. And then he struck gold, or rather blue, with ‘The Trap.’ He gasped and nearly dropped the movie as the sexiest pair of eyes on the planet pierced him from the other side of the wire shelf. They were those of a hunter on the prowl and from the looks of it, they’d just spotted their target.  

Kris whimpered.  

“You look lost, little lamb,” said the plump lips.  

*Kill me now, just…oh my fucking god.*  

The face disappeared and five seconds later a tall, scorchingly hot man was crowding Kris into a corner of the store, his intoxicating smell of power and cologne doing…things to Kris’ brain and body. He felt dizzy, high. *Want.* He tried to speak. “I…I…”  

“Shhh. I know what you want, what you need,” said the beast, popping open one button of the formfitting, ankle length trench coat he was wearing to show a bit of black leather while palming Kris with his other hand.  

Kris might’ve wet himself a little.  

“So eager. What’s your name?”  

“K-kris.” The hand squeezing and stroking his dick did not relent.  

“Well Kris, you’re coming with me, aren’t you?” The man’s commanding voice made it clear that Kris had no option but to obey, and he could only nod in response. “That’s a good boy.” Without another word he grabbed Kris by the wrist and began to pull him along.  

Kris had no idea where they were going, so when he found himself facing a small door at the very
back of the shop, he turned to his captor in question. *I didn’t know this place had a separate room.*

“But aren’t we—”

“Quiet.” The gorgeous beauty with his hair slicked back into a pompadour knocked five times and did not look surprised when the door opened to reveal an enormous, muscled giant of a man.

“Name?”

“Wolf. Two o’clock.”

The brute checked his list, nodded and stood aside to let them enter. *What the fuck is going on?* Kris actually felt a little scared, but that only made his cock throb harder. He let himself be dragged down a dimly lit corridor with doors lining both sides of it. *Oh jesus…oh fuck me!* Nothing had even happened yet and he was already panting and desperate. After a minute of walking the man jerked to him halt and pinned him roughly against the stone wall next to door number 29.

“Now you listen to me. You’re mine, you understand? You’re going to do whatever I say when we get inside this room.”

Kris’ heart pumped overtime to keep up with the adrenaline bathing his synapses. “What if I don’t? What if I fight?” He reached around to dig his fingers into that tempting ass, but he wasn’t allowed. The hunter yanked his hands away and pressed them into the wall above his head.

“This is my game.” He leaned closer and closer until his lips were millimeters from Kris’. “You can try to fight if you want, but you won’t win,” he whispered, and then sank his teeth into Kris’ bottom lip and chewed on it, pulled it, and bit it so hard that Kris lost control and came in his pants with a yelp. “That’s right. I own you,” said the wolf as he massaged Kris’ limp cock. “Now get your sweet ass inside.”

Kris licked a drop of blood from his lip and thought he might just pass out from the sexiness of this game. And when the door swung open and he saw what lay waiting for him, he almost fainted for real. *Holy mother of fuck!* Strong arms caught him, picked him up and deposited him onto a black exam table in the center of the small room. It was wider and longer than the ones found in doctors’ offices and had a leather restraint fastened at each corner. A silver tray on a cart stood nearby holding a whip, a stethoscope, a pair of nipple clamps and a feather.

“Sh-shit…f-fuck,” he stammered, unable to look away from the searing gaze of the hungry man eyeing him like a piece of meat. Kris wanted to be destroyed, taken apart at the seams by lust. He didn’t resist when he was pushed onto his back, forced to shield his eyes from the harsh light hanging from the ceiling above. When the one in control angled the lamp away, Kris recognized it as a gesture of kindness from the man he loved. He shuddered and lifted his head to watch Adam remove his trench coat.

“The buzz around town is that you’ve been very sick, so I’m here to...help.”

That last word shot straight to Kris’ recovering dick, but nothing could have prepared him for what was hiding underneath the coat. “Oh my god! A leather nurse? Are you fucking kidding me?!” He was hard pressed not to come at the sight…again.

“Did I say you could talk?”

*SHIT.*
Thigh high boots climbed almost all the way up to the edge of a skimpy leather dress, which had a zipper, a fucking red zipper down the entire front of it. A matching red circle with a black cross at its center decorated the right shoulder and pale, muscular arms strained the hems of the virtually sleeveless uniform. As if that all weren’t enough to make Kris die on the spot, the most succulent, most orgasm-inducing bulge forced the red zipper to bow obscenely. He drooled.

“Now, what kind of nurse would I be without a few extras to put my patient at ease?” Adam pulled from his coat pocket a tube of dark red lipstick and a faux nurse’s hat that bore the same cross as the dress. He tied the fabric behind his head and sauntered over to Kris’ side with the lipstick in hand.

Harsh, broken gasps squeezed from Kris’ lungs as the temptress hiked up his dress and straddled Kris’ hips. *H-he’s not w-wearing any…oh my shit!* Adam writhed on top of him, then opened the lipstick and made a show of applying it perfectly without a mirror. He might as well have been on a stage. Kris whined low in his throat and tried to buck, but the nurse rose up and slammed down again.

“Don’t. Move.” He rolled off the table and began to undress his patient. Kris was helpless, awash in the sensations of leather and sex and jaw-dropping kinkiness. Every time the air hit a new patch of bare skin, he was sure he wouldn’t be able to lie still a moment longer because he wanted to tear that tiny outfit right off of Adam’s body and fuck him until they both passed out. The desires to ravage and to be ravaged warred with each other until Kris’ naturally submissive nature won out.

At last he was completely nude, his cock standing at full attention and still wet with cum from before. No sounds broke the silence as Adam strapped Kris’ wrists and ankles to the table. When he was finished, he surveyed his handiwork and smirked. “You will lie there and you will take it all, everything, and then I’m going to fuck you…hard.”

Even if he’d been permitted to speak, any words Kris could’ve uttered were lost somewhere between his heart and his dick. He swallowed and trembled and didn’t care that a trickle of saliva was dripping down his chin. *Help.* He was owned and he knew it.

“Time for your exam. I like my patients healthy before I break them.” Adam picked up the stethoscope and wrapped the headset around his neck. There was no warning for the chill of the metal diaphragm against Kris’ chest.

“Christ!”

“Hmmm, cold?” He stuck out his long tongue and laved at the spot, warming it as effectively as a heating pad could.

This torture continued for at least ten minutes. Each time the freezing instrument left Kris gasping, Adam would replace it with his hot, slick tongue. Thighs, arms, neck and cock, they all got ‘examined.’ Kris wondered if the wolf would go deaf listening to his thunderous heartbeat screaming for mercy.

“Fit as a fiddle,” declared nurse Adam. “Looks like you could use some time to catch your breath.” He leaned right over his bound captive and sneered. “Too bad. No one gets to rest in my office.”

Shitshitshitshit and more, fucking more! Kris never wanted this to end. He gave in to the game completely, every goddamn nerve on edge as Adam bounced the nipple clamps in his hand. His teeth clenched, his toes curled and when the first twinge of pain struck, Kris cried out in pleasure. “Twist
it! Fucking…pull it!"

A dark chuckle filled the room. “I think Mikey likes it.” The wicked nurse slid his finger into the ring attached to the clamp and tugged.

“Oh god…oh oh shit!”

Two nipples, two clamps and two fingers yanking, not hard enough to do real damage, but enough to drive Kris to the brink. “Need to come, need…touch…please,” he babbled.

“Touch? No, I’m not sure you deserve that yet. Too much talking.”

The whip came next and nurse Adam made it into a dance, rolling his hips and groping himself as he brought the lash down onto Kris’ thighs.

“Yes! More!”

“No more. I’m going to finish you off now, you kinky little rabbit, with the barest of touches.” The devilish man took up the feather and Kris knew that he was in trouble. Red, red lips hovered close to his and he strained his neck, wanting to kiss those ruby pillows.

“If you’re a good boy, I’ll let you, but for now…” The black feather was used in only one place. Kris didn’t see how it was possible to come from such a light touch, but he’d obviously underestimated the skill of this hunter. Adam drew it up Kris’ length and then down the other side. Up and down. Over and over, caressing it, tickling and tormenting.

Kris couldn’t figure out if he should laugh or cry, but his dick wasn’t confused in the least. It leapt for it, reached for the feather, would’ve disowned Kris if he’d tried to deny it the simple, erotic sensation of butterfly-cock kisses.

“Come.”

Kris choked on his drool.

Adam continued to feather him. “I said…come. NOW.”

Despite any preconceived notions of how this was impossible, Kris’ body listened to its master, arched into air and erupted. “Oh, oh god…oh FUCK!!” The restraints pinched as he spasmed, his seed drenching his stomach and the feather alike. “Holy shit, mother of fucking fuck!”

“Tsk tsk, you think I’m gonna let you kiss me with that mouth?” Adam shook his head, set the dripping quill on the tray and released Kris’ ankles. “Your ass is mine,” he growled as he unzipped his dress and climbed onto the table. “Get your fucking knees up.”

_Dead. I’m dead and I’ve gone to kink heaven._

A slinking panther pounced on him, consumed him, made him scream his fucking head off…and kissed him passionately afterwards.

His mouth was covered in red lipstick by the time Adam gently dressed him and carried him to the car outside, murmuring words of love and affection the whole way there.
The last Sunday of April found Adam relaxing on his back in the studio while Kris’ fingers quietly sweet-talked the piano. He’d been rambling for almost an hour straight, petting Fifi and just letting whatever thoughts crossed his mind pass through his lips without the need for a response. He’d started off telling Kris about his meetings with RCA.

Turns out that they’d sent a rep to watch him perform at the club and once they’d seen all the buzz he was creating after observing several shows, it was a no brainer to sign him. Negotiating a contract on the other hand hadn’t been so easy, but with the help of an entertainment lawyer that Eber had hired for him, they’d managed to convince the label that Adam was worth the risk and got just a little more than the average advance for an unknown recording artist. The RCA reps had been nice enough even with dollar signs clearly marking their eyes, and they were very excited to have Adam start recording next month.

Reality hadn’t quite sunk in yet. It felt so surreal to be discussing his dreams on such a practical level, and he was more than a little terrified about how he’d handle notoriety. After verbally journaling that part of the week, he moved on to his meeting with Brian.

“Kris, you should have been there. I mean, no, I’m glad you weren’t, but…jesus, he’s so much like me in some ways. The thirst for control, the stubbornness… I’m so glad he went to therapy, but shit, he still seems to think that the best way to get what he wants is to demand it.” Sound familiar, Lambert? Yeah, yeah, can we move past the taunting already? It’s getting a little boring. “And can you believe that when he was on the street he tried to pick up a few guys? Fucked up, I tell you, and then he goes and gets punched in the stomach for it!”

“Damn.”

“I know! I’m scared that he’s going to end up in jail or badly injured.” Adam sighed and spent the next minute scratching the spot behind Fifi’s right ear that made her head tilt really, really far. She squinted her eyes as if in bliss before flopping onto her side, a boneless noodle dog. “I don’t want to interfere too much though…I can’t. Just trying to be a good example.” You? An example? Oh would you fucking knock it off already? Mentoring makes me feel…really, really good about myself. So there. He mentally kicked the critical voice trying to play the bully and grinned when all was peaceful again, leaving room for the next topic to amble around. “So, what should we do for our next role play?”

The music stopped abruptly with a discordant crunch of notes. They hadn’t talked about yesterday evening, both of them feeling that the best way to express themselves this morning was to make slow love in the dazzling sunlight that was pouring in through the bedroom window. Adam chuckled at the flush of red that painted Kris’ cheeks and the noticeable tenting of his sweat pants. “Thinking about it again, are you? Nurse Adam making you all hot and bothered?”

Kris shuddered, his fingers bent in frozen arches over the keys, and turned his head to look at Adam with something like pained lust in his eyes. “You are wicked.”

“Is that so?” Adam purred. He rolled over and up onto his hands and knees. “Wicked like you want to spank me for being a bad boy? Or wicked like I’m gonna crawl over there and make you forget
about everything but my mouth on your cock?” As he prowled across the carpet to his sexy lover, Adam suddenly remembered the infamous piano bench blowjob he’d received from Kris last Fall. *Just about killed me. Time to return the good deed.* He could almost taste the warm, heady flavor that was uniquely Kris. His mouth watered.

But apparently Kris was feeling wicked, too, because he giggled, jumped up from the bench just as Adam reached it and ran out of the room. “You want it? Come and get it!”

“Why you little fucker!” Adam laughed, rising to his feet to follow. “You are in so much trouble! Wait until I--”

“Ouch! Shit!”

*That sounded like pain.* Adam raced toward the bedroom and saw Kris slumped against the hallway wall. “Angel! Are you okay? What’s the matter?”

Kris heaved a huge breath and straightened up. “It’s nothing, I’m fine…really. Just my leg.”

Adam’s heart dropped as his brain was instantly flooded with irrational fears telling him that Kris would be permanently injured and that it was all his fault. “The doctor told you not to run!” Without warning he scooped his boyfriend up, walked over to the couch and sat down with Kris on his lap. “Where does it hurt?”

“Adam,” Kris snorted, “I’m not a baby. It was just a little stab of pain. I swear I’m fine. Nothing some Tylenol won’t fix.” He started to get up but Adam was having none of it and held him in a tight grip.

“You don’t move! I’ll get it, and you should call your physical therapist…maybe even the doctor.”

Kris rolled his eyes and sighed. “You realize that it’s Sunday? Come on, would you stop treating me like a child. I promise I’m okay and--”

“But what if you’re not? What if something’s wrong with the way it’s healing?” Adam shifted Kris off his lap and stood up to get the bottle of painkillers. “I knew it was too early to remove the cast! I knew something like this would happen and I was right, wasn’t I?”

“No you weren’t,” Kris replied with an edge to his tone. “Nothing is wrong, I--”

“How can you know that?” Adam yelled before stomping into the bathroom, ignoring Kris’ reply of, “because it’s my leg.”

*Shit, where are those goddamn pills? They’re supposed to be right here!* Adam kept all the medicine in the same little basket under the sink, but he couldn’t find the Tylenol. *I bet he moved it…he’s always moving things!*

“It’s in the kitchen, by the way!” called Kris.

“What? Why? You know medicine belongs in the basket! This is exactly why I organize things…so in case of emergency I’ll know where to find stuff!” He shot a glare at Kris on the way to the kitchen.

“This isn’t an emergency and will you please quit shouting at me?”
“I’m not shouting! I’m--” But just then he caught sight of his boyfriend’s sad face and bit his tongue. *Shit. I am yelling.* He knew the real reason had nothing whatsoever to do with the location of the medicine. Fifi was at his ankles, looking up at him curiously, and her innocent eyes made him think about the future. *Is this how you’re going to behave when one of your kids gets hurt?* A heavy sigh eked out of his lungs. *Let go. You can’t control everything. You can’t.*

Adam dropped his chin to his chest and attempted to feel less like an overprotective parent who’d accidentally forgotten to lock the cupboard containing household cleaners. And there was the bottle of Tylenol on the counter, mocking him. He tried not to crush it in his fist when he picked it up after filling a glass with water. “Sorry,” he mumbled when he’d returned to the couch, holding out the medicine like a peace offering.

Kris took it, popped open the cap and tapped out two pills. “I know what you’re thinking,” he said quietly, “and it’s not your fault, so just stop blaming yourself already. You didn’t make it rain and you didn’t make that car lose control and hit us…not unless you became all-powerful while I wasn’t looking.” A tiny smirk twisted his lips. “I mean you’re pretty damn persuasive, but really baby, isn’t it kind of big-headed to think you can control the weather?”

Adam couldn’t help but snicker a little at that. “Aww come on, I made the sun shine extra bright this morning right when you came all over me.”

“Well I never said you weren’t supremely talented in bed, mister sex god,” chortled Kris. He gulped down the water and turned to Adam once more. “But seriously, you--”

“I know. I’m working on it.” *Be patient with yourself, Adam. It’s like a making Bolognese sauce, takes forever but it’s worth it.* The geyser of guilt gradually began to simmer down since Kris’ leg wasn’t falling off or anything, and he let himself flop back on the couch. “I’ll get there.”

“No doubt. And if it makes you feel any better, I’ll make sure and tell Dr. Bressler that my leg hurt when I see her on Tuesday. Plus I’ve got a follow up appointment with Dr. Nelson at the end of the week.”

“It does, but the thing that makes me feel the best is that you put up with my assholery.”

Kris set the glass on the coffee table and snuggled up to Adam, making them both sigh as their bare chests connected. “You’re not an asshole, you just care about me.”

*Hear that? He really is an angel. Remember when you thought he’d leave you?* “I do, and I’m sorry I yelled.”

“Apology accepted, but don’t let it happen again,” Kris teased, wiggling until he was lying halfway on top of Adam. He walked his fingers down the tall man beside him, slowly, and Adam moaned when he felt the tip of a calloused finger slide under the waistband of his sleep pants.

It looked as if things were about to get heated, but something seemed to shift just then. Maybe it was their brief spat or the way the clouds were moseying along outside, but the couple settled for making love with their lips and hands. Lazy kisses. Lazy strokes. Each man with a fist wrapped around the other’s length, gently pulling, thumbing, squeezing…knuckles brushing soft cotton amidst drawn out groans and ‘I love yous’ and panting breaths into hot mouths.

Afterwards, they took turns sucking on each other’s fingers.
It wasn’t the perfect morning for a run but ever the creature of habit, that didn’t stop Adam from quietly lacing up his sneakers at seven o’clock on Wednesday. Kris was still asleep, his body huddled in a tight ball as if Adam were still curled around him. *So cute. Like a little Krissy kitty.* He pressed his lips to Kris’ temple and crept out of the room.

Thick, black clouds rolled in from the north as Adam did a few leg stretches on his porch. *Fuck, I bet it’s gonna pour. Maybe just a short run today…I could probably make it to work and back before it rains.* The crisp air was better than coffee in waking up all of his senses, and every smack of his feet on the pavement made him glad he hadn’t chickened out. Whatever was happening his life, running could put it into perspective. Worrying about the future, dealing with the past - none of that mattered when he was in the moment. He felt his lungs working and his heart thumping; it was enough.

Adam recognized some of the other people, those who took to the cement most mornings. They often nodded at him and eventually he’d started to return the gesture. It was like they all belonged to a club that didn’t require socializing. Adam liked it. *Yup, there’s orange shirt guy, right on time. He looks really tired today. Wonder why?* When he rounded the corner he saw miss I’m-too-sexy-for-my-spandex warming up on the curb with her arms stretched over her head. She winked at him, as usual, and leaned back to expose her bare midriff even more. Adam chuckled to himself and kept going.

He turned off his usual route and sped up a little towards Sew Your Soul. The clouds threatened. *Bet my jacket will look really cool in this light.* Adam took it for granted that ‘his’ jacket would be there because it always was, and this had lured him into complacency thinking that he had all the time in the world to purchase the garment.

It was a horrible shock to his system to see the empty display stand.

“*No!”* Adam plastered himself to the window. “*No! My jacket!”* He started to cry, feeling the fingers of regret choke his chest until he could barely breathe. People stared, but he didn’t fucking care. It was supposed to be his. The fates had said so. “*No no no!”* Hot tears spilled down his cheeks as he stood there sobbing and banging his fists on the glass, mourning the loss of something more than just clothing though he did not know what.

And of course, just as it does in movies during times like these, the sky decided to open up at that very moment and unleash its storm upon the hapless man. “*Fuck!*”

Drenched to the bone with sadness and rain Adam trudged back home, still weeping although no one could distinguish his tears amidst the down pour. *Why are you so upset about this? It’s just a jacket. For god’s sake, pull yourself together you big baby.* “*It was NOT just a jacket!”* he yelled to no one as he continued down the street, his white t-shirt now clinging and see-through. Sloshing shoes, sloshing heart. There was no rational way to explain that somehow his future had been tied to the jacket and its disappearance would surely throw everything off course.

When he burst through the door twenty minutes later he was shivering hard.

“*Adam!”* A spoon clattered to the table and Kris came rushing over. “*Why did you go running in the rain? Baby, are you crying?”*
“It’s g-gone, gone,” he sobbed.

Kris took him by the hand and led him to the bathroom. “What is?”

“The j-jacket at work…someone b-bought it.” His teeth were warring jackhammers.

“You’re freeezing, got to get you out of these cloths.” Adam didn’t resist when Kris undressed him and rubbed him dry with a huge towel. “How do you know someone bought it?”

“Ran to the s-store,” he sniffed, “and it’s n-not there. You know how m-much it meant to me.”

“I do. Maybe it’s being cleaned or something. Come on, let’s go cuddle and you can tell me all about it. Still plenty of time before work.”

But Adam didn’t want to talk. Snuggled under the warm blankets with Kris, he cried without understanding why. It felt very similar to weeping out the ocean of sadness that’d been buried deep inside him for so long. Kris held him tightly and whispered comforting words into his ear like, “S’gonna be okay…shhhh, there now, I’ve got you.” The taunting voice tried to poke its head up and harass him with shame, but it got drowned in the sorrow and retreated with a pout.

When Adam was wrung drier than an over-baked cake, he lay silently, feeling empty and wondering how on earth he was going to face work. He snuffled into his lover’s chest. “I don’t get why I’m so sad,” he croaked after a few minutes. Because you’re a fucking baby, Lambert. Please go away, please…just leave me alone. With a massive effort he forced his own criticism into hiding again and focused on Kris’ skin and loving presence. Don’t ever let me go, angel.

“It’s all right not to know.” Kris’ words perched on the air, hovering over Adam’s ears as if waiting for him to accept them. Just sitting with emotions like disappointment, sadness or anger sometimes felt like the hardest challenge Adam had ever tackled; not understanding the source was almost unbearable for a man who craved control. Why do things have to be so hard for me? “I’m tired.”

“Why don’t you call out sick today?” Kris suggested with a hint of hesitancy as he trailed his fingers up and down Adam’s back.

Adam seriously considered it, but he had to find out what happened to the jacket. Maybe I can buy it back. “No, I need to go.”

“You sure about that?” Those gorgeous eyes, large with concern, seemed like they had the power to make everything better. Windows to the angel’s soul…if I look long enough will I be healed? He could let himself get lost in them, could stay home from work and even ask Kris to do the same, but that wouldn’t be the Adam he liked.

“Yes, I’m going to work. Take a shower with me?”

“Course I will.”

He let Kris wash him, pamper him and make breakfast for him. It felt nice.

By the time he was ready to leave, Adam had decided that he’d find the new owner of the jacket and somehow get it back. Maybe he was supposed to fight for it. He kissed Kris for a long time at the door before heading out. “Have fun at work. See how many girls’ numbers you can get this time,” he
“Very funny, now go before you’re late, my courageous man.”

Adam gave him a last peck on the cheek and hurried to his car, feeling determined…and stubborn of course. He had to purposefully avoid looking at the display window when he arrived at Sew Your Soul so he wouldn’t get sidetracked from his mission by emotions. “Tommy!” he barked as soon as he was through the door, startling the petite man behind the counter.

“Jesus! Give me a heart attack why don’t you!”

Adam walked up to him and got straight to the point. “Where is it? Who bought it?” He didn’t need to explain further; Tommy had seen Adam gazing at the jacket too many times not to know what he was on about.

“Calm down, alright? Nobody bought it,” said Tommy. He reached out as if to touch Adam’s arm in reassurance, but then dropped his hand abruptly. “It’s in the studio. Alex said it’s not for sale anymore.”

Relief washed over Adam that he didn’t have to chase the jacket down, but now he had a new concern. “Not for sale? I mean…why?”

“Dunno, he wouldn’t say.” Tommy smiled a little and said, “Try not to worry too much?”

Suddenly it occurred to Adam just how genuine of a person Tommy was. Underneath all the pretty beat a really good heart. It made him want to express his appreciation for the patience, flexibility and understanding the man had shown. *How about a hug? No, that’s taking it too far.* “Um, okay I’ll talk to Alex.” Adam placed both of his palms on the counter across from Tommy’s. “So, uh thanks, by the way for, you know, being so good about everything and…” His fingers trembled a little but he managed to lift them, because they were fingers and not bricks damnit, and awkwardly patted the back of Tommy’s hand twice.

“No problem,” Tommy replied casually, but Adam could tell that the gesture had meant something to him by the way his grin was growing, wide enough to show off those cute dimples.

*Are we friends now?* Adam shoved his hands back in his pocket, nodded and went to find out what the fuck Alex was up to with the jacket.

“You’re late,” came his boss’ greeting from behind the drawing board.

“Sorry, Tommy and I were—”

“Never mind. I want you to try it on.” A hand shot up and pointed to the mannequin on the other side of the studio, and there it was, just as stunning and mysterious as the last time he’d seen it. Why in god’s name it pulled at Adam was anyone’s guess, but at Alex’s words he flew across the room, the beginnings of tremulous hope blowing into his heart. *Please, universe, let it be mine.* He carefully removed the gold and black distressed leather from the model and slipped his arms into the sleeves. As it settled onto his shoulders, Adam felt a shiver crawl up his spine. Perhaps he was getting carried away with this whole destiny thing, but he couldn’t ignore the overwhelming feeling that he was meant to wear this magnificent work of art at a special time in his life.

Alex stood, walked over and studied him. “Hmmmm.” He made eye contact, holding Adam’s gaze for
several serious seconds. “I’m about to get in your space, alright?”

No, it’s not all right, but fuck it. “Okay,” Adam whispered, thinking that if he was ever going to be a success in the entertainment industry then he would have to get used to people being up close and personal. He tried not to stiffen when Alex approached him and began tugging on the jacket here and there. It’s fine…just uncomfortable because you’re not used to it. Nothing bad is gonna happen.

“Zip it up.”

Adam did.

“How does it feel?”

He waited until Alex had backed up a few feet then lifted his arms up and down, rolled his shoulders and twisted in place. The jacket moved with him like skin. It fits. “Good, yeah. Who did you design this for?”

“Keanu Reeves, when he was your age.”

“You have got to be kidding me.” There was no way Adam could imagine the man wearing a jacket like this one.

“Nope, around about that time he was starring in the movie ‘Little Buddha’ and I was just getting my name out there. He heard through a friend that I could design him something artsy for the premier.”

Alex shook his head a fraction and smirked. “I was very young at the time, much younger than him and I guess I got carried away…he didn’t like the finished product.”

Adam’s mouth fell open. “No way! How could anyone not be head over heels in love with it?” An idiot apparently. Adam didn’t have anything personal against Keanu and liked him in plenty of films but seriously, he’d have to be blind not to want something created by a genius.

“Yeah well, he can’t act either. Anyway, just goes to show that it wasn’t meant for him after all.” He looked like a psychic would just before revealing the future, pensive and yet quietly excited at the same time. A tear was already beginning to gather in Adam’s eye as Alex said, “it’s for you.”

Weren’t there supposed to be angels or frolicking unicorns or rainbows…something to show that the universe had heard those words and could commence the celebration? But no, it was just Adam with his spinning head and damp cheeks, staring at a truly mysterious man. “W-why me?”

“I have my reasons. All you need to know is that it belongs to you, or it will when you’re ready for it.” He held out his hands, indicating that Adam should remove the jacket.

Don’t wanna. And what does that mean, when I’m ready. I’m ready for it now! “But--”

“Take it off, I mean it.” There was no arguing with those light blue, rather steely eyes. “I’ve worked with tons of celebrities and I saw your show, watched you interact with people here and at the club. You’ve got some serious work to do. Talent is only enough if you want to become a recluse, or be known for your social awkwardness more than your singing. Now hand it over.”

What the fuck? He’s got some nerve! “You should talk!” Adam snapped, surprising himself. “Your social skills are just as bad as mine if not worse!”
“I don’t need them. You do. If you want this jacket, you will work for it.”

Alex’s sudden change in behavior was so unexpected, so unbelievably infuriating that Adam didn’t know what to do except shrug out of the leather and pass it to his boss. **Who the fuck does he think he is? My life coach?** “So let me get this straight. You, a person who hides behind a drawing board all day, you want to teach me how to become more socially successful?”

Alex snorted as he gently returned the jacket to the mannequin. “Successful at least on the surface because let’s face it, you will be famous someday. But I’m not going to teach you a goddamn thing. You’re going to learn all by yourself. I’m assigning you to be Ryan Seacrest’s personal fashion assistant. He’s been asking me for ages, but obviously I’m not going to do it.”

“What? Are you out of your fucking mind?” Adam bellowed. “Not a chance--”

But Alex plowed right on. “You’ll shop with him once a week, advise him and attend celebrity events with him when you’re available to do so.”

“Like hell I will!” The very idea made Adam want to vomit. Paparazzi following them into clothing stores, hundreds of strangers whose faces could trigger him, journalists wanting to know who he was, maybe even asking him personal questions. The potential for loss of privacy was staggering. Not to mention that Seacrest was notoriously high maintenance and nitpicky about his appearance. **Plus he’s a man for fuck’s sake!** Adam’s insides were already squirming, ready to expel his breakfast at any moment.

“Fine,” Alex replied coolly. He returned to his stool behind the drawing board. “But you know, immersion therapy has helped millions of people overcome their fears.”

“No shit Sherlock, but how’s it gonna look if Mister Seacrest’s assistant is having panic attacks and flashbacks every five minutes? Huh? Tell me that?” Adam gasped loudly at his own words. He’d just shot a gaping hole in the brick wall surrounding his fortress. His stomach heaved.

Just then Tommy knocked on the door and poked his head in. “Um, guys is everything okay in here? The customers are looking worried at all the noise.” At the sight of an enraged and trembling Adam, he raised his delicate eyebrows so high that they disappeared beneath his blonde fringe.

Adam wanted to run. So he did. He ran right out of Sew Your Soul vowing never to return.

***

“Adam wait!”

He ignored Tommy’s fast approaching footsteps and began to jog home, some part of him knowing that he was in no state to drive. “Leave me alone!” Adam sped up, his long legs carrying him farther and farther away from the insane Alex and his insane ideas. **Immersion therapy. What the fuck does he know? Plenty about you now, Lambert, way to lose control. Fuck!** He didn’t slow down until his feet were firmly planted on the walkway to his apartment.

“Adam!”
He spun around. “Shit, Tommy! I told you to leave me alone!”

Clearly winded, Tommy grasped his knees and panted heavily. “Just... hear me out okay? Please, then I’ll go. I can... even talk right here... if you want.”

Adam considered him, the man he thought might be a friend, and felt that it couldn’t hurt to at least listen. I'm not changing my mind though. He nodded and sat down on his porch. “Talk.”

“Look... I have no idea... what happened back there,” Tommy began, then took a few deep breaths until his wheezing subsided. “But I know Alex really values you, even if he doesn’t say it. He’s a bit of strange cat.”

“You can say that again,” Adam grumped. “He asked me to be Ryan Seacrest’s personal fashion assistant. Can you believe that?” He kicked at a nearby rock, imagining it to be Alex’s head.

“No shit!”

“Yep.”

“Well that’s a fucking good gig. You’ll have at least a little media exposure before you even put out a record.” Tommy’s stomach growled. “Damn, I’m hungry.”

Adam wondered why Tommy didn’t weigh three hundred pounds. Probably all goes to his fingers. They’re so long for such a tiny guy. Bet it helps with playing the bass though. Maybe I should go hear his band perform one of these days.

Adam shook his head to get himself back on track. “There is no way I could do that. I don’t care if it’s a good gig. If he’d suggested someone with a lower profile, but Seacrest?” He glanced up from the ground and saw that Tommy was tugging on one of his many ear hoops.

“God, he’d kill me if he knew... you have to promise never to tell him I told you.”

“What are you talking about? And stop fidgeting, you’re making me nervous.”

“Oh, okay. Remember when we all hung out after your set that one night? I saw Alex there, only he doesn’t know I saw him, and….” Tommy bit his lip before continuing. “He was sketching you.”

Adam stared. “That is fucking creepy.”

“No! Not like that,” Tommy laughed. “He was designing clothes for you, page after page of them. This is going to sound really weird but... I think you inspire him, as an artist I mean.”

Well what the fuck am I supposed to do with that? Isn’t it obvious, Adam? He’s invested in you, and how would he make clothes for a famous singer who was never seen in public? Who wasn’t confident enough in the spotlight to show off his designs? Well that’s a hell of a lot of faith to put into someone he barely knows. What if my album tanks?

“Adam? You still with me?”

“Yeah, I just... shit. Tell him I’ll come in tomorrow to discuss it with him. But that doesn’t mean I’ll do it!” he added quickly. It’d be way better to take things at my own pace as I gain recognition with my music. “Just that I’m willing to talk about it.”
“Cool,” said Tommy, looking a little sad. “Wish I had people who believed in me like that. Megan is sweet, but you’ve got Kris, who worships the ground you walk on, and you told me how excited RCA is about your record, and now Alex.” He laughed in a gloomy sort of way. “You’re damn lucky, you know. Opportunities seem to fall right in your lap and you’re surrounded by people encouraging you all the time. Anyway, see ya tomorrow at the store.”

Tommy was halfway down the walkway when it hit. *You’re taking it all for granted, Lambert, you ass.* “Hey!” he called to the sullen man. “When is your band playing next? Maybe Kris and I can come see you perform?”

The beaming smile on his new friend’s face as he said “that would be really, really awesome,” made Adam feel like a better person.

***

Kris came home with a surprise in his hand, but Adam gave him a thorough kiss before addressing the oddity. “Flowers? I thought you hated them.”

“I do, but…well I was walking through campus on my way to the parking lot and I saw these Cornflowers…my mom had them in her garden…and it struck me how amazing they’d look on your skin.”

“Umm, okay? I take it you’re gonna tell me what that means,” Adam chuckled as he went back into the kitchen to make sure the chicken wasn’t burning.

“I want to draw you, wearing nothing but these,” said Kris, indicating the fuchsia and blue-purple blossoms.

*Well that should replace a few bad memories.* “Mmm, that sounds like the perfect end to a really weird day. Hope you don’t mind if I talk your ear off over dinner.”

Adam barely touched his food. His plate of chicken and rice grew increasingly cold while he related the whole jacket story, Alex’s crazy idea and Tommy’s revelation. Kris was the perfect audience, gasping and empathizing in all the right places. “You’re kidding! What the hell, why doesn’t he just give you the jacket now? And the American Idol guy? And Alex wants to make you clothes? Holy shit, baby, what’re you gonna do?”

*God I love this man so fucking much.* “I have no idea. Sleep on it I guess. And somehow I’ll have to get over the fact that he knows I have more issues than he thought. But let’s not talk about it anymore. Right now, I want to make sure I’m not taking for granted the most important thing in my life.” Adam caressed the little angel on his bracelet and gazed with utter devotion at the man across from him. “Draw me, and then let me make love to you until we fall asleep in each other’s arms.”

Kris melted. “Perfect.”

They modified their plans only slightly to play with Fifi after dinner since she was so eager to be with them. Their favorite game was ‘hide the hamburger.’ While one held onto the puppy in the bathroom, the other stashed her toy somewhere impossible to find. Sometimes it took her more than a few minutes, but Fifi always came back with the squeaky burger in her mouth looking absolutely full
of herself. After about a half an hour of this, the couple put her in the utility room and embraced.

“I missed you so much today, angel. So much.” Adam squeezed Kris as hard as he could without hurting the man and then crushed their mouths together, combing his fingers through that soft hair again and again. They gradually moved to the couch and continued to make out for a long time before Kris finally reminded Adam about the flowers.

“Please. You’re so beautiful.”

Adam chuckled softly. “Alright, how do you want me this time?”

“I’ll show you, but take a shower first. Wash all the makeup off and blow dry your hair so that it’s fluffy.”

After the shower, nearly twenty minutes passed before Kris was satisfied. He’d moved the lamps around in the bedroom several times, opened and closed the blinds, told Adam to first face the pillows and then the door, and fussed with the flowers for what felt like ages.

“Okay now?”

“Yeah,” whispered Kris, sounding awed. “You’re…god, Adam.” He walked around the bed and pulled over the freestanding, full-length mirror until Adam could see himself in it. There were only white sheets beneath his pale, freckled body. He gazed into his own eyes as he lay on his stomach with arms crossed and his chin resting on them. A cascade of the mildly fragrant flowers lined his entire spine and spilled onto the bed to his left. Not bad.

Kris swallowed. “Now turn your head towards me and close your eyes. Just rest like that.”

Adam sighed and felt himself relax completely. I am loved. I am loved. I am loved.

The soft scratching of Kris’ pencil lulled Adam to sleep, and when he woke it was to the heavenly touches of his lover’s lips on his back. “You know I support you, Adam. Whatever you decide to do tomorrow, I’m behind you one hundred percent.”

“I know, baby, and I’ll never forget it.” Hearts are meant to be whole, but sometimes they break a little from happiness before returning to a seamless state. Adam lavished Kris with love. He tried not to miss a single millimeter of skin with his kisses and nibbles, and treasured every sound of pleasure streaming from those crooked, parted lips. Thirty minutes went by. His long tongue dipped into Kris’ navel, swirled around his length and bathed his entrance until an hour had passed and the angel was crying out for Adam.

Chapter 61

A drop of freezing cold water quivered on Kris’ bottom lip. It hung there, shimmering, for ten seconds before falling to mix with the precum sliding down the head of Adam’s cock. The tall man gasped. “Fuck! Kris!”

Kris chuckled wickedly the best he could with an ice cube in between his lips. Tonight he was the
evil one, crawling all over Adam and using the chilly square like a tongue until glistening tracks of melted ice water crisscrossed nearly every inch of alabaster skin. He’s so beautiful like this... so open and desperate...and all mine. Kris shuddered, and it had nothing to do with the cold turning his lips bright red. When the ice dissolved he plucked another cube from the nearby bowl and immediately continued his torture, circling one of Adam’s nipples then the other before slithering down that hot body to dip into its navel.

Drawn out hissing noises began to sound from above as Kris moved the freezing toy closer and closer to Adam’s engorged length, squeezing those perfect thighs and inhaling the scent of his aroused lover. Trying not to choke on the ice, all he could do was moan in the back of his throat. There was something highly erotic about Adam’s smell; heat, cum and skin and...Kris swallowed a few trickles of water to steady himself because otherwise he was going to pounce on Adam in about one second.

He sat back briefly and groaned at the sight before him on the bed. Adam’s fingers were fisted into the sheets, his eyes shut, head thrown back and chest pumping up and down. “Don’t stop, angel...more...more, please...” he rasped, and the broken quality of his voice shot a chill up Kris’ spine. He felt like exploding right then and there, jerking off and spilling his seed all over Adam’s glistening skin. It wouldn’t take much, just one stroke maybe, but Kris knew what his boyfriend wanted and goddamnit he was gonna give it to him.

With an almighty effort, Kris commanded himself not to come and bent Adam in half; shoved his knees all the way to the headboard while snarling just a little around the ice cube. Adam opened his eyes, wide, and stared at Kris like he was caught in a trance. “Beast,” he whispered.

“You bet I am. And then all hell broke loose. Without preamble Kris ducked down, thumbed Adam’s cheeks apart and pressed the ice to his hole.

“Goddamn! God...fuck!”

“You ain’t seen nothing yet, baby. Kris sucked the square into his mouth briefly so he could lick and lick, flickering his tongue over the pink star repeatedly.

“Oh jesus...Kris that feels so...cold and warm and the most amazing-- fuck!!”

The ice was back with a vengeance, swirling around and around, pushing in...melting.

“Fucking...ahhh shit!” Adam’s toes curled in the air and he yanked his thighs back right to his ears, exposing himself utterly. Kris moved with him, turned the large sliver of ice with his lips and pushed it into Adam as deeply as he could, using his tongue to guide it in all the way. Adam’s hand flew to his dick and he thrashed on the bed, squirming and stroking and clenching. “Yes...yes!”

“No.” Kris pried Adam’s fingers away. “That’s mine and I’m not done with you yet,” he growled.

Adam whined, panting and looking frantic as he continued to writhe for a few more seconds.

Who’s the rabbit now? “You’re gonna come down my throat and it’s gonna be freezing.” Just to make himself absolutely clear, Kris snapped up yet another piece of ice and grazed it over Adam’s cock. “And then,” he said, silently dying inside at the way his lover yelped, “I’m gonna get my dick all nice and cold and fuck you into tomorrow.”

“Oh god...I love it when you talk dirty,” groaned Adam, his arms and legs falling flat to the bed as if
surrendering his entire body to Kris. “Do it…do it all…please…I want…”

If Kris had been a more selfish man he’d have skipped right to the fucking, but pleasuring Adam was high on his list of the most enjoyable things ever. The fact that Adam had discovered a kink only made Kris more eager, and the ice seemed to jump out of the bowl into his mouth. He slinked up the length of Adam’s body and pressed his cold lips to hot ones. They shared a moan. They shared the ice. Back and forth they passed the cube in a searing kiss that made both of their heads spin. In less time than it took for the ice to melt, the couple wrapped their arms and legs around each other and began to rut and rock, their lengths grinding, thrusting. Kris was on fire, lost in passion, almost forgetting about his plan to make Adam come unglued as he swallowed the last of the melt water.

With effort, he tore himself away. “Damn!” he puffed, sitting back on his heels and batting at Adam’s hands trying to pull him down again. But Kris was too quick, too crafty. He picked up the large plastic bowl beside them, which now held only a few cubes in an inch of water, and drank from it until he caught the largest piece. Although his mouth was already freezing to the point of pain, he sucked on the ice for a good fifteen seconds before spitting it out and attacking Adam’s cock.

“UHH!”

“Mmmmm.” Kris reached down and cupped Adam’s balls in both hands, rolled and pulled and massaged them as he sucked hard.

“F-fuck.” It sounded like a sob, but that was nothing compared to the noises he made when Kris slipped a cold, wet finger into his hole and curled it. And just as he was licking around and around that succulent dick like it was a fucking candy cane, Adam tensed.

Kris knew it would come in the very next instant to heat his chilled tongue and throat, the essence that he loved…craved, and he began to milk the cum right from Adam’s cock, his middle finger still pressing deep and torturous. Both long legs kicked out several times and then…

Nothing in the world was more erotic than Adam coming undone, Kris was sure of it. Even as he hallowed his cheeks and sucked, he kept his eyes open to watch. Back arched, heels digging, and teeth bearing down on lips before that beautiful mouth fell open. “Shit shit shiiii…oh!”

Kris closed his eyes to savor the warm liquid pumping onto his tongue, relishing the garbled sounds of pleasure tumbling from Adam’s lips. But there was no time to linger; Kris was near breaking point and the second he popped off his lover’s spent cock he flipped Adam over. And there they were, two rounded, pale globes. Kris massaged them with longing as Adam stuttered, “take me, f-fuck me, angel…I’ll make it so good for you.”

Those words spoken by the sex god himself pretty much fried whatever brain cells had been trying to function up to that point, and Kris’ hands were trembling, fumbling for the lube and the ice bowl and goddamn could that ass be any more delicious? Lube first, slick and warm, then his palm resting at the bottom of the bowl until it stung, and then a loud, fucking loud shout as he stroked himself with freezing fingers.

Adam shivered. Kris plunged. They both gasped and swore.

It was cold only for another minute and then the heat began to build with every snap of Kris’ hips as he straddled the backs of Adam’s thighs and fucked him. No dream or fantasy could ever compare to the actual sensation of his hard dick being gripped like a vice over and over. And Adam, god he was
straight out of a porn flick with those halting breaths and lips begging for more. Kris dropped to the beauty’s back, overwhelmed by the intensity of thrusting roughly inside Adam without having to be careful. They say that the brain is the biggest sex organ, and apparently it also recovers quickly from dying of lust because as soon as Kris thought about how much Adam trusted him, he came like a tidal wave.

Ten minutes and many licks later, he rose from in between his boyfriend’s legs and collapsed on the bed. “Can’t think of any better way to celebrate our awesomeness.”

“Here, here,” Adam croaked, his body splayed like a freckled star. “How about you turn in your final school project and I negotiate my future on a regular basis then?” They both chuckled weakly, neither having the energy for much more. All that was left to do was to pull the blankets up and snuggle all night long. So they did.

The moon looked on jealously as if wishing it too could find a heavenly mate to soothe its lonely existence. So large when the evening had begun, it grew smaller and backed further away from the couple’s bedroom window until finally settling with a sigh thousands of miles above their apartment.

***

Of all the people waking up to the same sun on Friday morning, only a small handful knew and appreciated what Adam had accomplished at work yesterday. Head held high, he’d stormed into Alex’s workshop and told him in no uncertain terms that he would only attend one publicity event with Ryan Seacrest per month until he felt comfortable with more. Alex was no fool and had agreed immediately.

“Mmm, angel, you are the most cuddliest cuddle of ever.”

Kris giggled sleepily into Adam’s neck. “You’re cute when you’re tired.”

“So are-- hey do you hear something?”

Kris listened, but the source of the noise came bounding in about a second later. “Fifi!”

They both craned their necks just in time to ward off the energetic pup headed right for their faces. Her large brown eyes spoke of pure glee and self-satisfaction. “How on earth did you get out of your room, girl?”

“Honest to god, we are gonna have to Fifi-proof this apartment. The other day she was this close to getting the cabinet door open.” Kris laughed to himself, remembering how he’d found their dog curled up in a pot not too long ago. The little one’s tail flew back and forth as she hopped around and licked their hands. “Alright already,” he sighed. Seven o’clock felt unnaturally early to Kris. Wonder if I’ll be able to sleep in all the time if I make it big as a recording artist.

“You go back to sleep,” said Adam. “I’ll take care of Fifi before I go running.”

“Have I told you how much I love you?”

Adam grinned and pecked him on the lips before rolling out of bed. “Yep, but I’ll never get tired of
hearing it….seriously.”

*Does he still need to hear it all the time to believe me? Don’t think so, not really.* Kris smiled. “Love you times a million,” he said through a yawn, then burrowed under the blankets again. The exquisite vision of Adam’s naked backside was just about to slip into his dreams when he heard his phone go off in the kitchen. *Who’s calling me this early?*

“I’ll get it, babe.”

“Seriously love youuuuu.”

Adam chuckled and left with Fifi trotting at his side. Kris got about fifteen seconds of sleep before Adam returned looking extremely concerned.

“Okay, Kim…yeah, he’s right here, just a second.” He held out the phone to Kris, who had sat up abruptly at the sight of Adam’s face. “She’s crying.”

Ever get that feeling in your gut where you just know something is horribly wrong? Yeah, Kris’ stomach was screaming with it. *Please let this be something minor.* He swallowed hard, staring at the phone and willing it to go easy on him. “Ma?” Heartbreaking sobs met his ear. “Ma, what it is it?” He was too terrified to guess. No one cries like that unless…

“Oh Kris, oh my baby, it’s your grandfather. He…”

She didn’t need to finish. Kris knew, and his heart died a little with that knowledge. “How…when?” he choked out, barely feeling Adam’s warm hand on his bare back. *I’ll never see my Pappy again.*

“About…two hours ago,” his mother replied, still weeping. “He had a stroke. I…we’re still at the hospital.”

Without thinking, Kris pushed down his own grief to comfort her. It was automatic. “Mama, I’m so sorry. I wish I was there to hug you and bring you Kleenex and--”

“I wish you were, too. I miss you s-so much right now.”

Suddenly (but not surprisingly), Kris felt like an awful son for being so far away in his mother’s time of need. The guilt was a rusty knife twisting cruelly in his already tender heart. He sniffed and wiped the tears from his eyes. “Maybe I could find a way to be with you?” Adam started nodding vigorously.

“That’s very sweet,” she said, seeming composed enough to speak now, “but plane tickets are expensive and with the funeral costs…anyway don’t you worry about me.” This of course made Kris even more determined to make her feel better; it always had.

“No ma, I’ll get there on my own, just give me time to figure it out. Just…you go take care of yourself and I’ll call you later, alright?”

Kim snuffled, her voice going thin and weepy again. “Okay, honey. We want to have the funeral on Sunday. It’d be wonderful if you could be with us. I love you.”

“I’ll see what I can do. I love you, too.” He ended the call and sat there in the middle of the bed, already planning and trying to remember if he had enough money on his credit card to afford a round
trip plane ticket. He didn’t think he did. It can’t be more than six hundred dollars or so. Maybe I could try to sell something.

“Kris, what happened?” Adam asked softly as he rubbed Kris’ shoulder.

“My grandfather passed away, had a stroke and my mom, she’s really upset. I really want to be with her for the funeral, but there’s not a lot of money,” he replied with a blush.

Adam gasped, pulled Kris onto his lap and hugged him. “Oh angel, I’m so sorry… seemed like you two were really close.”

Something very odd happened just then. Microscopic neurons traveling down the same old pathway suddenly stopped and remembered (thanks to Adam) that Kris had feelings about his grandfather’s death, too. They shook their metaphorical heads at both Kim and Kris’ behavior and began to run in the other direction, forcing their way into only recently charted territory. I did it again. Always thinking about her instead of me. Damnit! The tears came back, and this time they were for his loss, not his mother’s. “We were close. He used to give me quarters when my grandma wasn’t looking.”

The floodgates opened and Kris began to weep into Adam’s arms. Tighter and tighter he curled in on himself until he was a little ball almost completely covered by the gentle man whispering soothing words into his ear. No more smiles on the side and twinkling eyes. No more reassuring hugs. One of the few people he felt had loved him unconditionally was gone. His cries continued until Adam’s rocking motions eventually lulled him to sleep. Kris dreamt of Pappy smiling over his shoulder as he walked away and disappeared into nothingness.

When he tried to open his eyes sometime later they were glued shut by dried tears, but it didn’t matter because Adam was still holding him. He felt the scruff of stubble against his forehead and caught a whiff of slightly stale breath. Kris never wanted to move. I love him.

“You’re awake.”

It never failed to make him melt, the way Adam knew all the different ways he breathed. “Yeah, but don’t let go of me just yet,” Kris said with his eyes still closed. Adam squeezed him and lay down on his side, taking Kris with him. It was so warm, and if his heart hadn’t just been beaten up Kris might’ve really enjoyed the fact that they were both still naked. As it was he felt content to wear his lover as a blanket. “What time is it?”

“Nine.”

Kris forced his eyes to open through the gunk. “What? But you have to get ready for work!”

“I called in sick…for you, too. Used your phone. We’re taking the day off, angel, and this afternoon you’re going to get on a plane and go home to be with your family for the weekend.”

“But, but…”

Adam caressed his cheek tenderly. “I already called my folks and they bought you a plane ticket.”

At this, Kris sat up so fast that he made himself dizzy, adding to the embarrassment already flooding his system. “Adam! No, they didn’t have to…you didn’t…why did--”

“Hey, clam down, it’s all right,” said Adam as he took Kris’ hands and looked at him steadily. “It’s
fine really, you shouldn’t be worrying about that.”

Kris couldn’t help it. He began to protest, babbling about how it wasn’t right or fair because the Lamberts shouldn’t be spending money on him like that. Finally Adam rolled over on top of him and pressed their mouths together, effectively silencing Kris. After a brief kiss he drew back. “Are you gonna listen to me now?”

Kris nodded. But there’s nothing he could he possibly say to change my mind. I’m not going to be a burden on them. He gazed up into those beautiful eyes and wondered how anyone could have hurt such a caring and gentle person.

“First of all, you’re my family now, right?”

They shared smile and Kris nodded again, the unpleasant churning in his stomach lightened a little by Adam’s statement.

“And that means you’re part of my whole family. Well my mom and dad always told me that money in a family should be like blood in a body. It should go where it’s needed. If too much goes to one place, you get a hemorrhage, and if not enough goes to another place then your cut will never heal. You’re family, you need it, so you get it. That’s how things work, understand? There’s no use arguing.”

Wow. Can I have four parents instead of two? “That’s really, I mean, um…” Kris didn’t know what to say or how to feel, but he wanted to pay his respects to his Pappy and Adam’s family had made it possible. Don’t be a stubborn fool. “What time is my flight?”

“Three. You’ll be getting in pretty late, but someone will be there to pick you up and drive you home.”

“What? Who?”

“A car service. Your folks have enough on their plate.”

He thought of everything, and he’s right. “Adam, I…thanks.”

“Anytime, angel.”

They lay back down and Kris began to feel sad again when something else occurred to him. Being around his extended family was much easier with Adam around. “Don’t suppose you’d consider coming with me?”

Adam touched his lips to the top of Kris’ head and sighed. “I really wish I could but I’m supposed to have my first meeting tomorrow with Ryan. I’m so sorry I can’t be there to support you.”

Kris snuggled in closer. “It’s all right, I totally understand. Hope I can be just as brave without you there if my grandma starts in on me though. Wonder how she’s doing, poor thing.” He’d never seen his grandparents hug or even talk much to each other. Of course she loved him though…she’s probably devastated.

Adam crawled over to Kris’ side of the bed and scooped up his wild child pendant from the nightstand. “You don’t need me,” Adam said as he clasped it around Kris’ neck. “You’re a badass, remember? But if you want a shoulder to cry on and you can’t find one, call me…anytime day or
night, okay?”

Kris didn’t have as much faith in himself as Adam did. “What if you’re singing at the club?”

“Well then it’ll just be a really emotional song,” he joked quietly.

“What if you’re with Ryan?”

Adam scoffed. “Tough. He’s gonna be getting excellent and much needed fashion advice from me. He can just deal.”

“And you’ll be okay here all by yourself?” He’s not a baby, Kris. Yeah, but what if something happens to him and I’m not here?

“Course I will. What, you think I can’t handle being on my own?” There was a slight touch of defensiveness to his tone that made Kris wince. “I lived by myself for almost ten years, you know.”

“That’s not what I meant. Just…I love you is all and I don’t want you to get lonely. And what if Ryan is a total prick?” Who will comfort him?

The two men drew apart to look into each other’s eyes. Concern, anxiety, love and reassurance were all there, little currents of emotion beaming back and forth between them conveying messages that needed no words. But some things had to be said. “I’ll be okay, really, Kris. I’m learning that I’ve got a pretty awesome support system.”

Kris knew this of course, but part of him wanted to be the special one that Adam couldn’t manage without. Selfish. Not that long ago you were worried that he was too needy. And all along you’ve been telling him how strong he is. Don’t you have any confidence in him? “I’m sorry. You’re absolutely right. Honestly, I’m more scared that some hot young twink is gonna sweep you off your feet,” he chuckled.

“As if. Now you stay here. I’m gonna let Fifi in before she eats all the squirrels, and when I come back I’ll give you something to remember me by.”

The ‘something’ turned out to be love making so sweet that Kris actually cried afterwards, although that could’ve been his heart mourning for the man who used to hold him tight when he was sad.

At the airport that afternoon they kissed goodbye like couples do in movies before one of them goes off to war. It didn’t matter that they’d be apart for only a few days. Kris tried to memorize the placement of every last freckle peeking out from Adam’s makeup, feeling like he would need to call that beautiful face to mind many times over the weekend to stay sane amongst his family. Emotions would be high and old patterns rampant, he was sure of it. Pappy, how did you ever manage? You’re probably better off now in the peace and quiet of heaven.

“I love you so much,” Adam whispered fiercely as they hugged for the last time, then turned around abruptly and walked away without a backwards glance.

Kris nearly gasped at the sudden loss of warmth as he called out, “I love you, too!” Guess it’s like tearing off a band-aid. He watched his lover’s form until it disappeared around a corner, sighed and headed to the end of the long security line.

Kris had no idea that Adam began to sniffl as soon as he’d broken their embrace.
The first leg of his flight to Arkansas was without a doubt one of the most unpleasant he’d ever experienced. Not only did the overly talkative lady next to him seem to lack the ability to tell when she was being brushed off, but apparently it was also Clean-all-the-men’s-bathrooms-simultaneously-when-Kris-has-a-thirty-minute-layover Day at O’Hare Airport. Sweaty, exhausted and full to the brim, he barely made his connecting flight and had to beg the attendant to let him use the airplane bathroom before being seated.

For the next hour and half Kris tried to sleep but he kept thinking about Adam, wondering if he’d be lonely in that big bed tonight. It was nearing eleven-thirty by the time he landed and staggered out into the concourse with his garment bag, backpack and growling stomach. All the restaurants were closed at this hour, of course. Mom said she’d leave dinner out for me. Thank god it’s only a forty-minute drive home. And speaking of driving, I think that’s my car guy. Oh my god…no he didn’t! Adam!

The unsmiling man wearing a navy suit was holding a sign that couldn’t be for anyone else. ‘Kristopher Rabbit.’ Kris chortled loudly and the sound echoed off the walls plastered with glowing advertisements no one was looking at.

“Mr. Rabbit?”

“Yes,” he chuckled, “that’s me.” My boyfriend is the biggest goofball ever.

No-smile guy gestured to the exit. “Right this way, sir. Do you have any other luggage?”

Kris shook his head, let the man take his garment bag and followed him outside into the balmy night. Little Rock greeted him with all the familiar sights and sounds of almost home. The only difference was the black Cadillac sedan waiting for him instead of his father’s SUV. It felt kind of lonely to be driven to his house by a stranger, but all that changed about five minutes after he’d settled onto the soft leather seat.

“Mr. Rabbit, feel free to open the cooler in front of you,” came a voice from the speaker above his head. Kris glanced around until he discovered a silver latch on the partition separating him from the driver. He pulled it and found, to his delight, two cans of cold beer. Adam. “In addition, there is a hot meal waiting for you if you’d like.”

“Really? What is it?”

“Macaroni and cheese, sir.” Kris could tell that the man disapproved of such a cheap dinner, but he was probably getting paid through the nose for all these little extras.

“ Heck yeah I want it,” he giggled, thinking that Adam should get an award for most thoughtful boyfriend ever. The privacy screen lowered and a hand reached back, holding out a plastic bowl of steaming mac and cheese with a fork stuck in it.

“Compliments of…ahem, Adam Wolf.”

Kris just about died of laughter. When he could finally breathe again, he took the bowl, popped open
a can of beer and enjoyed a very nice ride home. He was loved, even from afar.

In no time at all Kris had pulled up the old doormat on his porch and retrieved the ever present spare key. He crept inside, trying not to make a single noise in the dark and quiet house. Sleeping. Good, they were probably exhausted after last night. Although he wasn’t really hungry anymore, he ate the leftover chicken and au gratin potatoes still warm under the foil before heading upstairs to his old room because it would make his mother happy. As he lay down ten minutes later, nothing stirred in the night except for his hands reaching for a warm body that wasn’t there. He slept fitfully.

“Kristopher! You’re here!” were the first sounds he heard at seven the next morning. His mother rushed at him, still in her robe with her hair a mess and face pale. “Oh my baby boy, I’m so glad, so glad,” she cried as she scooped him up and squeezed the life out of him. Kris felt hot tears on his neck and started to comfort her, telling her it would be all right even though it wasn’t. A parent couldn’t have done a better job than he did.

“Good morning, son.” Kris glanced up to see his father standing in the doorway, looking happy to see him but slightly uncomfortable, too. “You always did know how to get her to calm down better than me.”

Yikes. Why does that feel so icky? “Erm, hi pop. Let me just…come on, ma. Why don’t you let him help you? I need to wake up a little and get dressed. There we go.” He handed her over and she sagged against her husband.

“I’ll be right back,” said Neil, and he left with his arm wrapped around the woman who was less put together than Kris had ever seen her. If I felt Pappy’s love, she must have felt it ten times more. She probably counted on that all of her life. Kris had a bad feeling that with his mother in this state, he was going to be busy holding her up all weekend. But what about me? He frowned, thinking about the pendant around his neck and asking himself if it was appropriate to try new behavior in the middle of a family crisis.

His father returned after fifteen minutes. “I put her back to sleep.” He sat down on the bed next to Kris. “Son, your mom is in bad shape. She and her father were intensely bonded and his death has hit her very hard.”

“I can see that. And Grandma?” Neil sighed heavily. “She’s very quiet. She didn’t even cry at the hospital. I think she might still be in shock. I don’t know if you noticed your brother sleeping on the couch when you came in last night…Silvia is staying with us until at least after the funeral if not longer. Kris…” He paused and rubbed his work-hardened hands together. “I’m glad you’re here to comfort your mother but…well I just know that you’re probably missing your grandpa, too and…don’t let her take all your time and…” Neil shook his head, a gentle bear who had no idea how to express what was on his mind.

Poor pop. Never too good with words and feelings. “It’s all right, I think I know what you’re saying.” You want me to let you take care of her.

“Do you? Good, well yes, then that’s very good. Okay, I’m going to start on breakfast and then I’ve got to return a call from the funeral home.”

I guess change is gonna happen whether it’s appropriate or not.

Saturday was chaos. Apparently nobody in their right mind tries to put together a funeral service and
reception in a day and a half, and Kris found himself bumping elbows with a number of relatives from morning till dusk as he cleaned the living room, answered phone calls from friends and family and even helped make pies for the reception. Occasionally Kim would amble out and hug him tightly until his father finally put Aunt Mabel in charge and went to lie down with his wife.

In all of the hubbub, he didn’t have time to go sit with his grandma, who stayed perched on the couch for most of the day staring at the carpet. He wasn’t even sure what to say other than, “I’m sorry, I miss him, too,” which he’d already said when she first came downstairs.

“K, come here for a sec.”

Kris put down the pairing knife and turned to Danny. “What do you want?”

Danny beckoned him into the hallway and started whispering. “Listen, I overheard Grandma and pop arguing about Pappy’s will last night and they mentioned your name…mine, too.”

“Serious?” There wasn’t any money in the family, so Kris couldn’t imagine what his grandpa would leave him.

“Yeah, Grandma kept saying that she wouldn’t give you…whatever it was, I didn’t catch it, but yeah…said you couldn’t have it because you weren’t living a Christian lifestyle.”

“But she has no right! If Pappy wanted to--”

“Shhhh! She’ll hear you! Look, just thought you should know, and I think it’s crap. Adam is freaking awesome.”

“Thanks, I mean it.” How can she get away with things like that? Thank god for people like Danny. They bumped shoulders. “I miss him.”

“Me too. Remember how he used to sneak us quarters when--”

“Grandma wasn’t looking?” Kris finished for him. “Totally. And you always spent it on the dumbest things.”

“Heyyy, Pokemon cards are not dumb!”

Fortunately, Aunt Mabel called them back to the kitchen before Danny could mention what Kris used to do with the quarters.

That evening after a delicious meal that Amanda and Mabel has whipped up, Grandma Silvia held court in the living room. It was very crowded, and Kris barely had room to move all squished in between his cuddly mother and Danny.

“It does no good to blubber over such things,” she began with a pointed look at her daughter. “Frank is gone and crying won’t bring him back.” Kris squeezed his mom’s arm and hoped that she wasn’t listening too hard. “So when I hand out these letters he wrote to everyone about a year ago, I don’t want to see any tears. If you can’t help yourselves, then go somewhere private. I will not tolerate crying around me.”

You ain’t fooling anyone, you old bat. Silvia’s eyes were noticeably glassy and her bottom lip trembled as she spoke.
“Mabel and Kimberly, you’re first.”

The two sisters stood to receive their letters and Kim went straight upstairs with hers, already sobbing silently. My poor mama! The urge to erase her sadness was so great that Kris’ heart literally hurt with it. As he waited his turn, he fought to stay put on the couch.

“Kristopher.” It sounded like a warning. “Your letter.” The words that came out of her mouth next were so quiet that Kris was sure no one but him heard them. “I daresay he’d have wanted to see you settled down with a nice young woman before he died. Such a shame.”

Kris reeled back like he’d been slapped in the face because that fucking stung. “How dare you?” he growled under his breath. “Give.me.that.” Her fingers were too old to prevent him from snatching the envelope away and running outside with it. Just cut my heart out why don’t you Grandma? God! The soft Arkansas bluegrass met his furious fists a moment later. What kind of sick pleasure does she get from treating me like shit? Huh?? After his knuckles were thoroughly green and red, he pulled his phone from his pocket and speed dialed Adam.

A very giggly voice met his ear. “Krissy! Me and Ali were just talking about you!”

Kris started yelling at once. “What is her fucking problem? Why can’t she just leave me alone? I thought…after Christmas that it would be different, but no!” In short order his anger became grief. “It’s never enough, I’ll never be good enough for her, for ma, for anyone!”

“Angel! That’s not true and you know it!”

“No, Adam, I don’t. I feel like if I don’t give my mom all the attention she wants then she won’t love me. If I don’t betray who I am then Grandma won’t love me, and Pappy, this letter I got probably says how disappointed he is that--”

“Stop it,” Adam said firmly. “I guarantee that your mom loves you no matter what and so does your grandma even if she’s being an idiot. And the letter, well you just open that and read it right now. I’ll wait.”

Kris pulled at the grass sullenly with his free hand.

“Well, are you reading it?”

“No.”

Adam puffed into the phone. “He loved you. You told me so yourself.”

“Fine.” The old yellow stationary felt too dry in his fingers.

Dearest Kris,

When I was a young boy I found a rock by the lake near my house that was shaped exactly like a heart. I must have been about ten years old and I remember being amazed at how smooth and perfect it felt in my hand. I kept it in a tin box for the longest time and every once in a while I took it out just to have another look. So many times I wondered if I should give it to someone, my mother or maybe a pretty girl, but I never did.
Your grandma discovered it not long after we married and always told me I should give it to the church garden as a symbol of my love for Jesus. But after all these years, I’ve decided that you should have it as a symbol of my love for you when I’m gone. Silvia won’t be happy, but I don’t care. It belongs to you now.

And don’t you worry about me. I hear that heaven is a pretty nice place.

All my love,
Pappy

P.S. I know what you did with the quarters.

“Angel? Baby, you still there?”

“Yeah.”

“You okay?”

“Yeah.” Kris was fairly certain that rocks only get heart shaped after being worn down by the awesome power of the water, and he supposed that he was okay like that, like a pretty thing that had survived a hell of lot.

He read the letter to Adam and then to his grandma (except for the P.S.). She reluctantly gave him the extraordinary stone at the funeral and didn’t cry, not once throughout the entire service. Everyone else did including Kris, but he had a talisman now to save him from despair, something tangible like the war medal Danny had received and Kim’s new ring. And when he walked by Pappy’s coffin to say goodbye he whispered, “you’re a wild child, too.”

All the way back to LA that night on the plane Kris held the rock, letting the warmth of his fingers bring the cold heart back to life.

Chapter 62

“Damn it.” Adam blinked the tears from his eyes as he strode away from Kris at the airport, making sure to keep his arms swinging easily until he rounded the corner. The rest of the terminal was a blur as he jogged through it and out the revolving doors, dodging people and the approaching fingers of sadness. He barely made it to his car before breaking down. _Shit. Be a man, Lambert. You told Kris you’d be fine remember? It’s just a couple of days._ But that didn’t matter, nor did the fact that before he and Kris lived together they’d spent plenty of nights apart. Plain and simple, being in bed without his angel was going to suck. _And he’ll be all alone, too._ As much as Adam dreaded the coming night, the thought of Kris, grieving and lonely, was almost too much to bear. Pushing past his sniffles, he called the car service to set up a few extras that he hoped would make his lover smile. He had to laugh at the confusion around the request for mac and cheese.

“Sir, you want the driver to take him out to dinner?”

“No, I want Kris to be served a hot meal in the car. Come on Eric, you’ve worked with my family
for years and you know we’re a bit weird. And cut it out with the ‘sir’ stuff.”

“Alright Adam, or should I say Mr. Wolf?” chuckled Eric. “I’ll make the arrangements with the limo company in Little Rock right away.”

“Thanks. Don’t forget the Budweiser, and it’s Kristopher with a K.”

“You got it.”

Adam felt a little better after hanging up with Eric. He sent a text message to Kris - hopefully one that didn’t sound too needy - knowing it would be many hours before he could expect a reply. Time to find some distractions. Six hours ‘til work, that’s plenty of time to fix the backyard. A few deep breaths and he was off to find some rocks big enough to prevent Fifi the escape artist from digging under the fence. Bet mom will have some in the gardens. Of course, it didn’t hurt that she gave the best hugs on the planet.

“Ali, you busy today?” Double dose of hugs.

“Nah. The store is closed for inventory, but since I’m the manager now I get to make other people do the hard work…at least for today. What’s up, puppy?”

“You wanna help me with a project?” Adam knew the perfect way to tempt his best friend. “You’d get to play in the dirt!”

“Oooh, okay!”

“Cool, meet me at my folks house in half an hour.”

***

The Lambert house was grand to be sure, but none of the beautiful things inside could quite compare to the marvel that was Leila’s gardens. What had started out as a relatively bare piece of land gradually became host to four distinctly different environments, which could also be seen as a whole landscape because of the way they blended together. The pond was the centerpiece to an annual flower garden that grew right to the edge of Eber’s favorite part of the backyard, a large vegetable patch. The man had an addiction to raw green beans. Leila added a shade garden complete with bench swing when she found out she was pregnant with Adam, and from there one could just make out the ripe cherries on the other side of the yard. The cherry tree along with orange, apple and peach trees made for a miniature orchard that had provided plenty of fruit for Adam and Neil to munch on as they grew up.

When Leila wasn’t busy being a mom, wife and volunteer landscaper for businesses and homeowners, she could be found amongst her flowers, bushes and trees. Adam’s earliest detailed memory of his mother was watching her garden hose spring a leak and laughing so hard that he’d fallen off of his sitting rock.

He liked nature well enough, but Adam was more of a people person as a youngster and hadn’t really cared where he was as long as his friends and family were nearby. As he got older, it was only mom and Alisan who drew him back to the gardens time and time again.
“God, remember when we used to play hide and seek here?” I was so different back then. So carefree around everyone. He longed for that now.

Alisan giggled. “I could always find you quicker. You were a terrible hider,” she teased.

“Yeah yeah, but at least I played fair. You were always running to my mom to dig in the mud while I searched for you. And there you’d be, ooo’ing and awww’ing over some flower with her.”

The two friends grasped hands as they walked around the grounds and continued to reminisce. “True, but you never wanted to get dirty unless you were in a bathing suit at the beach. I had to find someone who understood my need to commune with Mother Nature.”

“Oh puhlease,” Adam snorted, “you just enjoyed chasing me around the yard with muddy hands.” He looked over at her and caught a mischievous grin that spelled trouble. “Oh no you don’t. I swear to god if you try that in my backyard, you will pay for it with the worst tickle attack ever.” He chuckled at her pout. “Come on, let’s grab my mom’s wheelbarrow, there’s some good rocks over in the shade garden she said we could have.”

After loading up, Adam and Alisan went inside to get some hugs before leaving. “Adam, honey, please make sure to extend our sympathies to Kris again when he comes home.”

“Will do, mom. He really appreciated you and dad helping him out like that.”

“I’m sure his parents would do the same for you if they could.”

“No doubt. Such sweet people and I know you’re gonna love them.” Only three weeks until our families meet! Excitement bubbled up all the way from Adam’s purple painted toes to his shining eyes. A fairy must have secretly bedazzled his aura when he wasn’t looking because everyone sort of gasped at the way he was sparkling. “Okay, I’m a little bit happy about it,” he said with a blush.

“Well that’s an understatement,” laughed his mom as she crushed him into her arms, and her joy for Adam was obvious in her trembling lower lip and quiet sniff. Eber on the other hand stood off to the side, his arms crossed and face drawn into a solemn expression.

“Dad?”

“It’s nothing.”

Leila walked over and shoved his shoulder. “Spit it out already.”

I love my mom.

“Fine,” sighed Eber. “Well…didn’t you say when you came back from Arkansas that Kris’ family doesn’t like the fact that he’s gay?”

“No, I said it’s mostly his grandma who objects and maybe a few other relatives, but Kim and Neil and Danny support him and they like me, remember me saying that? They’re happy for us.”

“They’ll back your relationship openly? In public? At Kris’ graduation?”

“I’m sure they will. Hell, you should have seen the way they came together to stand up to Kris’
“But she’s family, that’s different.”

“Oh believe me, if they can support us in front of Sylvia...shit, that’s like taking on Napoleon. Everything else is a walk in the park. Look, our whole damn family is lucky. Not everyone grows up in such an encouraging environment and it took a lot of bravery for Kim to face her mother. Don’t judge her.” Adam stuck out his lower jaw, feeling protective of the woman he’d become rather attached to during his visit. *Plus she might be my mother-in-law someday.*

“I’m not judging, I just want to know who I’m dealing with. They are going to be staying in my house after all.”

“Our house,” Leila interjected sternly. “And I think Adam is right. Since when did you stop giving people the benefit of the doubt?”

Eber didn’t back down. “Since I overheard Kris telling Nana at Thanksgiving that he has to pretend to be straight whenever he’s around his family. What kind of parents ask their son to hide who he is for so many years? Parents who are ashamed, that’s who! And being scared of an old lady? How pathetic!”

“That’s enough!” Hot lava erupted from the volcano that was Adam. He came within an inch of his father’s face and snarled, “don’t you talk like that about them. Don’t you ever call them pathetic! You have no idea how hard it is to feel like you have to choose between love and doing what’s right! How dare you! Who the fuck do you think you are?” Without waiting for a response from either parent he spun around, grabbed Alisan by the hand and stormed off. The front door seemed to spring open for him as if afraid he might tear it off its hinges. “Drive, Ali.” He threw his keys to her and she caught them calmly.

“Sure thing.” Alisan had witnessed every single one of Adam’s moods over the years and she was no stranger to the occasional fight between the stubborn man and his equally stubborn father. She wisely stayed quiet on the way back to Adam’s apartment and let him vent.

“Unbelievable! What gives him the right? He doesn’t even know them! What the fuck?” Pissed didn’t cover it. Adam was irate. “Thinks he’s better than them, all high and mighty, but he’s had it easy compared the Allens!” He kicked the door with the side of his boot and swore again. “He’s the pathetic one! Thinks because he’s some big shot CEO that he can pass judgment on people he’s never met!” On and on he ranted until Alisan parked the car in the lot and turned to him. *Shit, here it comes.* “Don’t look at me like that.”

“Like what?”

He took a few deep breaths, trying to soothe the bull of anger still charging around inside his chest. His lungs protested. “Like you’re about to help me see things from my dad’s point of view.”

“Aww, you know I’d never do that,” she smirked.

“Right. At least save it until I’m holding a heavy rock I can bang my head against.”

“Whatever you say. Let’s get started on the back yard then.” She popped the trunk, flipped her hair and got out of the car.
Fuck. How does she do that? Now I want to know what she was gonna say. Seriously don’t like her sometimes. Grumbling under his breath, Adam joined Alisan who was wondering out loud how they were supposed to get all the stones from the car to the yard. “I’ve got a couple cleaning buckets we can use for the smaller ones,” Adam offered.

Twenty minutes later Alisan was up to her elbows in dirt (Adam let her do all the digging), and each boulder they buried half way into the ground seemed to take with it a fraction of Adam’s fury. When at last he could think about the fight without growling, he sat down on a rock and sighed. “So…go on already.”

Alisan wiped her brow. “Well,” she began, completely unaware of the earth now streaked across her forehead, “didn’t you think at first that Kris’ parents were ashamed of him? I mean when he first told you how it was at home?”

“Yeah, but I don’t anymore. They, well Kim mostly, just has a hard time standing up to her family…like Kris used to.” He felt a surge of pride at how far his boyfriend had come in the last several months. So brave. God I miss him.

“Mmhmm, but we’re just talking first impressions here. It’s not a stretch that your dad might think Kris’ parents are also ashamed of his relationship with you and lied about liking you…maybe even that they secretly blame you for being with their son.”

Adam’s eyebrows shot up in disbelief. “No way. That is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“To you it is, but you know how protective he gets sometimes.”

“Hmph. Guess it runs in the family. But even if you’re right about his feelings, that’s not a good reason to start throwing insults. Talk about overreacting!”

“Yeah,” snorted Alisan, “and that runs in the family too. Listen, I agree that your dad was out of line, just don’t let this fight turn out like the great battle of two thousand and six. God help me, I don’t think I can handle another one of those.” She tucked her hair behind her ears, making war paint lines of mud on her cheeks.

“It won’t as long as he apologizes,” Adam assured her, frowning as he recalled the month long silence between him and his father the year he’d refused financial help and went without enough food for weeks. In a moment of exasperation, Eber had pointed out that Adam was acting out of the fear of being perceived as less than a man. Needless to say, that hadn’t gone over too well. Not helping to think about that right now. Adam threw himself into the task before him and worked up a sweat as he hauled the heavy stones around the yard.

At five-thirty he slid open the porch door to let Fifi investigate. She came bounding out, made a quick pit stop in her potty place and began to sniff the new perimeter. A few snuffles around a rock or two and she looked up at Adam with those large, expressive eyes that made her seem so human sometimes. “See if you can get around those, my little Houdini.” Fifi sat down on her haunches and appeared to pout. Adam giggled at her. “I’ll make it up to you with a nice long walk on Sunday. Come on, Ali, let’s go in and get washed up. Pasta fagioli sound good for dinner?”

“Hell yeah. God I miss your cooking, puppy,” she said as they walked inside and kicked off their shoes. “If only you could teach Matt how to make something besides instant potatoes and sandwiches.”
“Ha! You kidding me? It’s lucky I’ve managed to teach Kris the right way to chop vegetables,” Adam laughed. “So how’s things with Matt anyway?”

“Pretty damn good.” She smiled at him in a way that he knew there was something preventing her from saying ‘fantastic.’

“But?"

“But what? I said it was good.”

“Ali.”

She had the cutest smirk, really. “Wellll it’s just…he’s not as adventurous as I am, let’s put it that way.”

“In bed you mean.” Alisan’s self-confidence and untamed spirit was sometimes too much for men, but he’d thought Matt would’ve been up to the challenge. When she nodded and laughed, Adam suggested that she talk with Matt about it.

“I’m not so sure. I don’t want to hurt his pride.”

Adam could definitely relate. Gay or straight, men want to feel like the world’s greatest lover whether or not they were even close to that. “Have you tried spicing things up?” That’s a dumb question, of course she has.

“Well duh. But it’s like he thinks I’m gonna break or something. He treats me like a china doll,” she pouted, rubbing her hands under the sink water rather viciously.

“Awww, well obviously he cares a lot about you, hon.” Alisan made a noncommittal sound. “Tell you what, how about I talk to him tonight after my set, guy to guy, but real subtle like so it won’t damage his ego.”

Alisan’s hands froze and when she turned her head, her eyes were wide and sparkling. “You’d…you’d really do that for me? I mean…shit, that’s…”

…something that’s hasn’t existed in our friendship since high school. Holy Jesus. Time came to a screeching halt as the two of them goggled at each other. Adam clearly remembered his role as Alisan’s translator, so to speak, the one to help her boyfriends understand her wild nature. But with that memory came those of Alisan consoling him through his years of crushing on Sam.

Ten seconds passed in utter silence. Everything felt fuzzy, like a veil had been draped over the awful truth of what his devotion had cost him. “I…I…Ali?” As he fell he saw the blur of Alisan’s form rushing towards him.

Bang! Sam crumpled to the ground when the bullet hit him square in the chest. Adam’s bullet. Adam’s gun. He could feel it, heavy and lethal in his hand. His toes flexed in the sand and he aimed again. Bang! Devon was dead.


He killed them all in his mind. Eight bodies stained the beach with their blood and evil. “It’s done.” The waves crashed and Adam looked up, away from death and towards…peace. But would he ever
be at peace in the real world? Or was he destined to live out his life flinching at his own mind, the damn betrayer.

The ocean called to him and he went to it, leaving the corpses behind without giving them a second glance. His bare feet carried him effortlessly until they met cold water. As he stood on the shore gazing in awe at how the sun made everything look like flowing stained glass, his lips began to move of their own accord. “God, Universe…whatever is out there…please let the battles end soon. This is my prayer. Let the fear pass so I can spend every minute enjoying what life has to offer me. Please, I know what I have now. Love, I have love.” The moment the last word left his lips he felt someone shaking him.

“Adam.”

“No, I don’t want to leave. I’m not afraid of the ocean, I want to stay,” he mumbled, but it was all fading too quickly. He tried to hang on to the tranquility as consciousness wrapped its fingers around his frontal lobe and pulled it out of slumber. “Want to stay.” Alisan’s troubled face came into view despite his wishes. Then he remembered that she was part of the love he had and gave up the fight, letting his eyes open fully to the harsh kitchen lights and two heads craning over him. “Ali. Fifi.”

“I’m here,” said his best friend. Her voice sounded like peace and Fifi’s wet kisses felt nice on his cheek. “You passed out.” There was no need for her to ask why.

Adam blinked up at her, grateful that she always seemed to know the right way to react whether it meant calling crisis or gently cradling him as she was doing now. “How long?”

“A few seconds. You all right? You look less shaken up than usual.”

Am I okay? I had a dream or something. I killed them and I prayed to the universe. “I didn’t have a flashback.” As he tried to determine what he was feeling, Fifi hopped up onto his chest and tucked herself under his chin. “Hey girl.” His hand automatically went to her soft skin. I killed my attackers. What does that mean? Am I healed now or was that just wishful thinking? Too bad Sheila doesn’t have weekend hours. “I went to the beach, Ali, and I shot all of them and I wasn’t afraid…I felt calm and I prayed for the battle to be over so I could enjoy love.” He stared into the brown depths that had always been there for him. “Am I crazy?”

“A little, but I like you that way,” she replied with a light chuckle. “Something in that head of yours is working things out…just doing it with style, and drama of course. I’m so proud of you.” She hugged him tightly. “You can still enjoy love you know, even if the battle goes on for a bit longer.”

The part of his heart dedicated to Alisan sighed in agreement. “Yeah, I’m feeling that.”

“Damn right you are.”

***

I should call him. No, he’s got enough to worry about and he’s about to go to bed. You saw his text, he loves you times a million and he’s exhausted. But he’d want to know. That you fainted for a second earlier today and had a weird dream? You can tell him when he gets home.
It was only because Adam had performed “What’s Going On” so many times that he could have a conversation with himself in the middle of singing it. By the time his set was over and the gang was all settled at a table, Adam had convinced himself not to wake Kris up in the middle of the night.

“So, Ryan tomorrow, huh?” Matt leaned back in the booth and took a sip of his beer. “You’ve got to tell me if he’s as weird as he seems on American Idol lately.”

“What’s he done now? I never watch that show.”

“The man is losing it,” said Megan, her blonde ringlets bouncing as she spoke. “He’s grabbing girls in the audience and shit. Creepy.”

“Totally creepy,” Tommy added. “And he looks high sometimes with that smile that’s like, way too big for normal people. Here I’ll demonstrate.”

Alisan choked on her drink at Tommy’s ridiculous face and Adam had to pat her on the back several times. “Don’t die on me now, chica. I need you to keep my fans at bay since Kris isn’t here and Matt’s being such a slacker.”

“Hey, I am not!”

“Hmph. While you were busy macking on my best friend, some twink practically launched himself across the table at me.” He turned to his new friend. “No offense Tommy, but you’re too tiny to be a good bodyguard. I appreciate the effort though.”

Tommy stuck out his bottom lip in a pretty pout. “Sure, pick on the small guy. I see how it is.”

“Aww, my little elf, don’t pay any attention,” said Megan as she wrapped her arms around her boyfriend.

“Meg! You promised never to call me that in public,” Tommy groaned amidst hoots of laughter from the rest of the table.

Adam, still snickering, glanced around at everyone. This is fucking awesome. Look at me, just hanging out and almost relaxed. If only Kris were here it would be perfect. He felt uncomfortable socializing without the constant presence he was used to in situations like this, but on the whole Adam thought he was doing a bang up job. It helped to have Alisan and Megan on either side of him. And speaking of Alisan… she nudged Adam and inclined her head towards Matt ever so slightly. Ok, I can do this. She’s more than earned my efforts.

“Well now’s your chance to redeem yourself, Matt. I need a refill on my drink…looks like we all do and the server seems to have forgotten we exist. Let’s hit the bar.”

Since it was highly usual for Adam to walk around the club without at least three people surrounding him these days, he wasn’t surprised when Matt seemed taken aback at first. “You sure about that? They’re pretty daring tonight if that table surfer is any indication.”

“Yeah let’s do it. If you walk in front of me it’ll be fine.” The purpose of having an entourage was to help Adam learn how to develop a balance of ‘I need my space’ and ‘thanks for being a great fan, sure I’ll sign your napkin.’ It was extremely challenging and would be even more so with only Matt there, but Adam felt up to the task tonight. Smile and nod and keep walking. Do a few autographs at the bar, talk to Matt and then come back. Pretend you’re walking through a forest like Sheila said.
Matt scratched his ear and looked at Alisan as if seeking her approval. When she smiled encouragingly he shrugged his shoulders. “Alright, man. Your call.” He stood up from the booth, puffed out his chest and took a few steps away to let Alisan out so Adam would be freed from his self-imposed prison.

Adam wasn’t well known enough to have mobs forming around him, but he definitely felt the press of a steady stream of people trying to get his attention as he moved towards the bar. “Thank you, that’s very kind of you,” he said to them all, trying not to sound too robotic about it. *Trees, flashy and excited trees that think you’re the shit, even the guys. No threat, and you could totally knock any one of them flat on their ass if you had to.* He stuck close behind Matt who kept up a running diatribe of, “back up, please, we need to get to the bar.” Table surfer dude made a valiant attempt just as the two friends were about to reach their destination, but Matt saw him coming and stopped him with a stiff arm.

“Dude, not cool, give the man some room. If you want an autograph, ask for it nicely instead of hurling yourself at him.”

The skinny little blond trembled and strained against Matt’s arm. “Adam, you’re so gorgeous, so sexy,” he gushed breathlessly. “And you sing like an angel and a devil and oh my god…sign my chest.” He pulled up his shirt and thrust a black Sharpie at Adam. “Please.”

*Okay, really not threatening. Kinda cute in a dorky, desperate way. Not a problem, but only if you promise to stop acting like a human torpedo.* Adam chuckled a bit at Twinkie’s enthusiastic nod and how he moaned when the Sharpie touched his bare skin. After sending him on his way, Adam and Matt continued to the bar and ordered drinks for everyone at the table. While waiting Adam signed a couple autographs and then dove in with a tried and true method. “So things seem to be good with you and Ali. I’m really glad to see that because there’s not a lot of men who can handle her. You must be doing something right.”

“Yeah things are, I mean…huh?”

“Well most guys don’t understand strong, passionate women, especially in bed if you get my drift.”

“Oh-huh.”

“I mean they just can’t imagine that not all girls like to be constantly treated like a delicate flower.” Adam gave this a moment to sink in before continuing, watching as Matt tried to look like he knew what Adam was talking about. “I know I don’t have to tell you that Ali won’t break. Pity it took her so long to find someone like you. Ahhh, here’s our drinks.”

Matt blinked a few times. “Good, good…yeah, erm, hmmm.”

*Never fails.*

Apparently the key to being left alone by fans was to concentrate on carrying three glasses of sloshing booze because no one bothered him on the way back to the table. Adam was happy to see Matt give Alisan a particularly rough kiss when they returned and even more thrilled by the swoop of pleasure he felt at his best friend’s grin of gratitude. The only thing marring what would’ve been a truly excellent night was his dread of spending the rest of it alone. He tried to keep everyone there for as long as possible, such a radical difference from the days when he couldn’t wait to escape to his private sanctuary. He even considered asking Alisan if she’d be willing to stay over, but she looked
so eager to be with Matt that he couldn’t bring himself to do it.

“I’ll be fine,” he lied when she hugged him goodbye at the curb outside. “Go enjoy yourself and don’t worry about me.”

“Thanks, puppy, you’re a really good friend.”

Hear that? Getting better means that you can give more. Sweet. He kissed her, hugged Megan and smiled at Matt and Tommy. “See you soon. We should all get together to see Tommy’s band next week.” That’s what normal friends do, support each other, right? And look at how happy he is. Way to go, Lambert. Not bad at all.

Adam really wanted time travel to be invented already so that Kris would be home to greet him when he walked in the door. Just the thought of the lonely bed awaiting him was enough to make his heart clench painfully. He drove around the block several times before going home, played with Fifi until she konked out, took twenty minutes to wash his face and when he finally couldn’t keep his eyes open a second longer, Adam crawled into bed holding Fifi right to his heart.

The minutes ticked by in the dark.

Sleep. Got a big day tomorrow so fucking go to sleep! For so many years Adam had felt safe and content alone in this bed and now… Don’t you cry, don’t! He’ll be back soon! But the goddamn sadness knew the perfect time to strike, to remind him of the old loneliness and misery masked by a sense of false security, to taunt him with irrational fears that Kris would never return. He squeezed Fifi tighter until she woke up whimpering. “S-sorry, sorry girl,” he sniffed. Just jerk off and go to sleep. Sex always helps. No! My treatment plan says I have to feel things, not escape them. But this is torture! You’ll never get a good night’s rest. “F-fuck.” The stupid bed was too big no matter how many times he changed positions, and soon he’d marked every corner with tears until at last he laid dead center and sobbed. Long wracking cries made his body heave so hard that Fifi had trouble balancing on his chest.

After a while of this, he turned the light back on. There was only one thing he could think to do. Still weeping softly, Adam got out of bed and proceeded to gather up as many pictures of Kris he could find. Next he retrieved his grandfather’s box and took down ‘the tie’ from the wall. He had to put Fifi in her room if this was going to work. Within ten minutes he was surrounded on the bed by Kris’ face, the music note pendant and the framed tie. The heavenly sounds of Kris’ voice sang to him from the stereo and finally, finally Adam fell asleep staring deep into the beautiful eyes of his angel while caressing his bracelet.

***

“Adam Lambert, nice to meet you.”

Here we go. Adam stuck out his hand and forced himself not to flinch at Ryan’s firm grip.

“Likewise.”

Two o’clock on a Saturday afternoon on Melrose Avenue meant crowds of shoppers. From celebrities to wannabes, the street was jam packed and in Adam’s opinion, Ryan couldn’t have picked a worse place to meet. Talk about a paparazzi wet dream; they seemed to be lurking
everywhere. Thank god I had all day to get ready. Shit, here comes one already. Seacrest is like a fucking magnet. “Um, let’s get going okay? Alex told me you want a new look for American Idol.” He started moving down the road and Ryan followed.

“Yeah, they’re finally giving me some breathing room on that. I’m sick of the same old crap. So you must be pretty good if Alex sent you. I’ve been trying to--”

“Ryan! Ryan! Over here!”

“Don’t worry about him,” said the TV personality. “I’ll handle it.”

Nothing could’ve prepared Adam for the weirdness of walking and having someone sashay alongside snapping pictures every two seconds. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Are my freckles covered enough? How does my profile look? Should I smile? Why didn’t I spend more time on my hair? Okay, that’s a little too close for comfort. Back off. But he was trapped between the pap and a man only six years older than him. Fuck.

“Ryan! Who’s this you’re with today?”

“Ease up, John. Adam is my new fashion consultant from Sew Your Soul. We’re just out for a little shopping.”

“Oooh, Alex’s place, huh?” Click. Click. Click. “You’ve got a great look going, Adam. How long you been in the fashion industry? Do you like working for Alex? I hear he’s a bit of a nutcase. Where are you taking Ryan to shop?”

“Seriously, John, let him be. Not everyone is as comfortable with cameras in their face as I am. Get my good side this time though.” Ryan stood still for a minute and flashed a cheeky grin.

This is too surreal. Is that gonna be me someday?

“Bye, Adam,” said John when he was done. “I’m sure I’ll be seeing you around.”

“Afraid you’ll need to get used to that rather quick,” said Ryan. “Mostly they’re just guys trying to earn a living. Be nice to the nice ones and rude to the rude ones.”

Adam nodded, determined not to show his intense discomfort at hanging out with a relative stranger who would probably be dogged by cameras all day. He felt a little sick. “So…what did you have in mind for a new look?” When Ryan began to share his thoughts, however, Adam’s queasiness went right out the door. “You’ve got to be kidding me. There is no way I’m letting you get on a stage wearing a blue bowtie, black sneakers and a suit.”

“But it’ll be great! Just imagine the look on Simon’s face!” squealed Ryan with a manic gleam in his eye.

“Not a chance. If you wanna raise eyebrows then we’re doing it my way.”

“But, but…the bowtie!”

Adam just shook his head and continued down the road, laughing at the man who seemed more like an overgrown puppy than a famous show host. Funny how years of assuming that every male on the planet was a potential threat had blinded Adam to the fact that so many of them were pretty okay. A
bowtie...honestly. Thank god Alex assigned me to him before he committed fashion suicide on national tv.

Adam had his picture taken several more times that day and it was so unsettling that when he was finally satisfied that Ryan wouldn’t be fired from American Idol, he went straight to Spin City. He found peace in Alisan’s arms and the quiet, steady work of helping with the inventory. About a half an hour before he planned to go home to get ready for another night of performing, Adam started listing off all the reasons why he missed Kris. Right in the middle of telling Alisan how adorable his boyfriend looked when he first woke up in the morning, Adam’s cell phone rang.

“Krissy! Me and Ali were just talking about you!” Thump, thump, thump went his heart, gearing up for an exchange of I love yous and all kinds of schmoop, but Kris had called in a fury over Sylvia’s insensitive behavior.

“He had to put an abrupt halt to the self-criticism Kris began to spout not only because it was inaccurate, but Adam knew all too well how destructive it could be. “Stop it,” Adam said firmly. “I guarantee that your mom loves you no matter what and so does your grandma even if she’s being an idiot. And the letter, well you just open that and read it right now. I’ll wait.”

After a little prodding, he heard the crinkle of paper and then a very long silence. “Angel? Baby, you still there?”

“Yeah.”

“You okay?”

Lying on his back in the jazz isle with the phone pressed to his ear, Adam listened as Kris read him the letter. He was close to tears by the end. “See, he loved you.”

Kris sniffed. “I’m getting that rock.”

“You go baby. She has no right to keep it from you.”

“I love you.”

“Love you too, angel. See you tomorrow night.” He hung up and sighed at having to endure yet another night alone. It didn’t help that Kris was probably going through the same thing only worse due to grief.

***

Five more hours.

*Walk Fifi all over town and show off her new clothes and doggie sling.*

Three more hours.

*Make and freeze a batch of mac and cheese. Shred cheese extra slow.*
Four hours.

*Jerk off to fantasies of Kris…again.*

Three hours and fifty-five minutes.

*Fuck.*

Somewhere in space there was a guy messing with satellites to turn the hands on Adam’s clock into ninety-year old men shuffling down the street in slippers. Just for kicks. Just to see how long Adam could stand it until he went bat shit crazy.

*Call Ali and bother her at work.*

Three more hours.

*Sing every song I can think of.*

Fifteen minutes.

*Yeay!*

Adam left the apartment so fast that he forgot his keys and had to come back for them. *Don’t speed, you’ll get a ticket and then you’ll have to wait even longer to see him.* Ugh, why don’t we have flying cars yet? It was hard to drive slowly when all he could feel was giddy excitement flooding his being, lassoing his right foot and making it step on the gas way too hard. Fortunately fate was on his side and he arrived at the airport ticketless and still an hour before Kris was due to land.

Adam paced. He picked at his nail polish. He ate some trail mix and paced some more. He played a stupid game he’d downloaded on his iPhone. He refused to budge when some woman tried to elbow him away from the prime spot where one could see the passengers arriving. He stood and waited until a familiar shock of brown hair came into view.

“He’s here! My angel is home!” Adam grabbed the lady’s shoulders and shook her before he knew what he was doing. “Sorry! I just…” He let go and started bouncing on his toes. “Kris! Kris!” he called out, waving like a complete fool at his man coming down the hallway. That beautiful (and tired) face burst into a grin and Kris started to jog towards him.

When at last they met Kris dropped his garment bag and backpack and fell into Adam. It felt so.damn.good. to hold him again that he never wanted to let go. *How can a weekend feel like an eternity?* “Missed you so much. Love you so much.”

Kris mumbled something against Adam’s chest that sounded like, “so lonely without you.”

The couple embraced until Adam was desperate to taste his lover’s lips. The security cameras saw it all. They way Adam swept up Kris’ bags and tugged the smaller man over to a corner of the terminal. How deeply they kissed each other as if at home making love instead of standing in the middle of a crowded airport at nine-thirty in the evening. The look of awe when Adam examined the heart-shaped rock, and finally the loud giggles after Kris finally told Adam what he’d done with the quarters.
I saved them and when I was fourteen years old, I paid a senior in high school to let me into a private party where people said boys kissed each other. About once a month I dumped a bunch of quarters into this guy’s hand and watched the hottest make-out sessions I’d ever seen. Better than a magazine any day.

“You’re such a rebel!” Adam chuckled as he and Kris walked back to the car. “People pleaser, my ass!”

The parking garage echoed with laughter. Adam knew that Kris would need some serious comforting after such a difficult weekend, but for now it felt wonderful to let the harmless fun of teenage curiosity buoy their spirits. Getting home wasn’t easy because it was illegal for a passenger to sit on the driver’s lap. They both wanted to be closer than close and were all too eager to fall into bed together upon reaching their apartment.

Adam gathered Kris in his arms and they made love sitting up in a face to face whole body hug, just rocked back and forth slowly, tiredly, exchanging languid kisses until they climaxed in whispers and murmurs.

Fitting Room

The delicious curve of the man’s fly told Adam that the dick he’d been drooling over for the past ten minutes was big enough to fill his hand but small enough to be commanded by it. Perfect. He licked his lips as he watched the gorgeous creature meander around the men’s department, moaning a little when he saw those slim fingers reach out to fondle a tie. In Adam’s mind, the stroking of the silk was a fingertip running up his cock. And that ass...so damn fuckable. Must have him. His patience suddenly shattered, and he began to stalk across the shining Nordstrom tiles until only a round table displaying ties like a deck of fanned out cards stood in between him and his prey. He gripped the edges of the table and leaned forward. Raw want poured from Adam’s being and the pretty boy gasped, his brown eyes instantly ensnared by fiery blue ones.

“You’re in trouble,” Adam said to the man in a soft hiss.

“Am I?” hot guy responded hoarsely, caressing the silk over and over as if he couldn’t stop himself.

Adam hummed under his breath and watched the denim-clad bulge grow for a few seconds before answering. “Mhmm. I caught you staring at me earlier and I don’t think you realize who you’re dealing with here.”

At this, the shorter man thrust out his chest and said, “no one I can’t handle.”

“Is that so,” Adam leered. After a quick glance around the store he invaded the man’s space, licked his crooked mouth and then spun away towards the fitting rooms, smirking when he heard a choking sound followed by hurried footsteps behind him. Gotcha, my little rabbit. On the way Adam grabbed a random black shirt from a rack.

The fitting rooms reflected what was, in Adam’s opinion, the pretentious air of the department store. In addition to solid doors that nearly touched the floor each had a padded bench inside, three chrome bars for hanging clothes and mirrors on two of the walls. A smartly dressed woman showed Adam into a room and he waited, palming himself through his last pair of sex pants while the attendant got the other man settled next door. Adam sucked his plump lower lip in between his teeth as he tried to
relieve the pressure, rubbing his eager cock impatiently. When the woman was gone, he took action. The gold plated handle turned noiselessly in his fingers and a wicked, anticipatory giggle escaped his hungry mouth. *Fuck.*

And there he was. Small and perfect and scuffing his foot back and forth across the carpet, his gaze rising from the floor as Adam entered. Vulnerable chestnut eyes laced with desire made Adam rush at the man so fast that he forgot to lock the door behind him. They both grunted when Adam slammed his prize up against the mirror. “Do you always let strangers manhandle you in fitting rooms?” he asked in a low rumble as he latched onto the tender neck before him and began to suck.

“I…I…oh god…that…shit…”

Tooth by tooth Adam unzipped the man’s jeans while sinking his jaws even deeper like a ravenous vampire and pulled blood to the surface until he was satisfied with the large red mark he’d created. “You like that, don’t you,” he growled softly over the moaning of the other man, not waiting for a reply before shoving a hand into the open jeans and curling his fingers around what he knew was the world’s most beautiful cock. The moist heat and wetness seeping through the cotton made him dizzy with lust. *No one can make him fall apart the way I can.* “You belong to me…say it,” Adam commanded as he began to squeeze and stroke.

“Yesssss.”

Adam leaned in, put his lips to that delicate ear and whispered, “Yes what?”

“I belong to you,” he groaned quietly, his nails now clawing frantically at Adam’s back, “I’m yours.”

The words, full of honesty and want, shot straight to Adam’s cock as well as his heart and he nearly gasped out loud. *Kris. Mine forever.* He pinned Kris’ wrists to the wall with his left hand and threw all of his desire into a searing kiss, consuming the smaller mouth and tongue with his own. Desperate noises sounded from his partner, muffled whimpers and grunts as Adam worked his right hand underneath a pair of heavy balls and further back. He spread the cheeks apart with his thumb and middle finger and began to tease Kris’ hole with his forefinger. Tap, tap, tap.

Kris shivered and bit down on Adam’s tongue, not painfully but hard enough to communicate his obvious need. *Feisty.* But Adam wasn’t about to give up control because he knew Kris wanted it like this, wanted to be dominated and maybe even a little frightened. *Fuck…so hot.* He let go of his captive, stepped back a foot and fondled his enormous bulging cock. Hyper aware that they were in a crowded store, Adam spoke in a hushed tone and yet it still dripped with sexual power. “Strip. Now.”

The harsh lights above would’ve emphasized the tiniest flaw if Kris had any, but all Adam saw was stunning beauty when, trembling like a newborn foal, Kris shucked off his clothing. “Fucking fantastic,” Adam breathed longingly. He gave his dick a last squeeze and pounced, whipping his boy toy around to face the mirror on the back wall. “See how fuckable you are,” he hissed as he reached around and dwarfed Kris’ erection with his large hand, thumbing the velvety head a few times just to revel in the barely audible moans streaming from Kris’ lips. “That’s right, give in to me.”

The mirror before them reflected the way Kris was slowly coming undone in Adam’s arms, his eyes blown and his naked skin twitching. “I could do anything to you right now,” Adam murmured, “anything.” He started to pump Kris’ dick steadily, spreading the dribbling precum all the way down to the base and back up again. “And you’d let me, wouldn’t you?”

Kris nodded, slack jawed and seemingly unable to speak at this point.
“That’s my good rabbit,” he said quietly, “now put your hands on the mirror and don’t make a sound...no matter what happens. Not even a moan, understand?”

Another nod, this one accompanied by the expression of a man who knew he was doomed.

Oh yes you are, my pretty boy. Adam quickly undid the hidden clasps of his pants, pushed them down just enough to expose his rigid length and brushed it against the small of Kris’ back. The energy it must have taken Kris not to break his silence went into the curve of his spine as he arched it deeply and presented himself to Adam, feet planted a good distance away from the wall and arms locked straight as if anticipating the storm that was about to descend upon him. Kris’ breath made ghostly patches of fog on the mirror and his fingers splayed as Adam tore open a packet of lube, slicked up and thrust inside him. Two sharp intakes of air. Two bottom lips caught and bitten. Two pairs of eyes narrowed in pleasure.

“Lick the mirror,” Adam ordered.

Kris’ whole body whimpered silently, but the tiniest spark of fire shone in his eyes when he began to lap at his own reflection with slow, seductive swipes of his tongue, staring Adam down the whole time.

Oh my god. Oh my fucking... Adam’s hips jerked involuntarily, drawing a wide smirk from the not so innocent boy in front of him. Such a little devil. He made the devil pay, pulling out suddenly and pounding back in with such force that Kris’s elbows buckled.

“Fuck,” Kris mumbled under his breath, his head hanging down and his chest heaving.

I am a goddamn genius for coming up with this idea. “What did I say about making noise,” whispered Adam. “You,” he said with another thrust, “will...” He snapped his hips roughly. “Be...” Snap, snap. “Silent.”

Kris’ eyes said it all, how fucking turned on he was, how badly he wanted this. Those mocha orbs were darkly lit points of desire begging his master for more, more, more. And Adam delivered.

Fingers digging hard into Kris’ compact body, Adam fucked his toy – plunged into him again and again, making sure to stop short of full penetration to avoid the skin on skin slapping sounds that would surely give them away. Utter silence pressed itself around them, forcing the shouts and moans to implode inside their chests. Teeth gritted and eyes rolled.

The shoppers outside continued to walk by and try on clothes without knowing there was a veritable feast of humping, writhing, straining flesh right in their midst.

After ten minutes, the quiet was finally broken by the squeak of Kris’ sweaty palms sliding down the mirror as Adam stroked him into orgasm. Cum hit the mirror and they both shuddered, their mouths stretched open in ecstasy.

Adam was just about to bite the nape of his lover’s glistening neck in a rush of post-high adrenaline when someone knocked on the fitting room door.

“Sir, is everything fitting okay?”

The men stiffened and then started to shake with suppressed laughter.

“Perfect,” Kris called out after regaining his composure, “it fits me perfectly.”

Still quietly snickering, the couple waited until the woman moved on before disentangling
themselves and kissing for a few moments.

“Wolf,” giggled Kris into Adam’s mouth.

“Rabbit,” Adam replied with a twinkle in his eye.

“Love you,” they said simultaneously.

After getting dressed, Kris washed his cum off the mirror with some cleaning wipes he’d brought while Adam nipped playfully at his ears. They left the fitting room together, winked at the attendant who was gawping at them and strolled out of the store hand-in-hand.

Chapter 63

Dark, heavy clouds were rolling outside, somersaulting right towards the patch of sky directly above Adam and Kris’ apartment. Inside one man slept soundly while the other crept towards the utility room. A loud clap of thunder startled them both. Kris sat straight up in bed and Adam froze in place just a few feet from where he hoped to catch Fifi in the act of trying to escape.

Kris knew at once that he was alone, but since it was o’dark thirty in the morning his sleep fuzzed brain couldn’t make sense of the fact. “Adam?” Lightening suddenly bathed the bedroom in an eerie glow and he shivered, missing the body heat that should be wrapped around him at this hour. He pulled the covers up to his neck and waited. Maybe he’s in the bathroom. The flash thunderstorm passed, the sun began to rise and still Adam didn’t return. Damn him for making me get out of bed at dawn. After slipping on a pair of boxer shorts Kris padded into the hallway, rubbing his arms and grumbling. The instant he spotted his boyfriend, however, he stopped dead in his tracks.

Adam was a panther stretching in the first rays of the morning sun, but infinitely more stunning and graceful. Almost naked in a pair of black bikini briefs, he looked like he was praying, bowed down on his knees with the rest of his form prostrated flat to the floor. Those taut thighs, the sublime curve of his ass and the sinuous arch of his spine leading all the way to broad shoulders and long, freckled arms reaching straight out in front of him – and the whole package bathed in glowing sunlight – it was enough to raise every molecule of Kris’ being to full attention. He swallowed hard, not sure at first if he wanted to sketch the vision or pounce on it. Pounce, definitely pounce.

Adam turned his gaze from the bottom of the utility room door and pressed one finger to his lips with a sly grin, effectively silencing the moan Kris was about to utter. The seconds ticked by torturously, as if anyone could stand there looking at such a gorgeous creature and not feel tormented by the inability to touch it. If part of Kris weren’t so curious to discover how Fifi was managing to escape he would’ve done his best to drag Adam back to the bedroom and ravage him.

Suddenly they heard a clatter of nails, a thump and a whine from the utility room. Clatter, thump, whine. Three times the pattern repeated and then the door slowly swung open. There was Fifi hanging on the handle, her little front legs gripped tightly around it as the rest of her body swayed back and forth. Her bat-like ears only accentuated the expression of excitement that was plastered all over her tiny puppy face.

“I don’t believe it!” Adam cackled, and Kris couldn’t help but join in.
“I’ll be damned,” he laughed.

Fifi gave a start at seeing them there and dropped to the ground at once. She landed on her feet and wasted no time in attempting to kiss her owners good morning. Apparently she couldn’t care less at being caught in the act and was perhaps even proud of the opportunity to show off her intelligence.

“Fifi, you ridiculous animal,” snorted Adam as he scooped her up and rose to his feet. “What are we gonna do with you?” She wriggled up his chest until she was close enough to kiss his nose.

Still amused, Kris peered inside the utility room and pointed out the series of shelves that she’d probably used to get to the door handle. “Or maybe she jumped right from the floor,” he added, “I wouldn’t put it past her.”

“Me either. Guess we’ll have to start locking the door from now on, or we could just leave her out at night.”

“Are you kidding me?” Kris could just imagine being woken up every morning by puppy kisses way earlier than he’d like. “I’ll stick with my regular alarm clock if you don’t mind.”

“Aww come on, angel. How cute would it be to cuddle up at night together?” Adam grinned brightly and held Fifi up next to his face. “We’d be just like a little family!”

He had to go and say that, didn’t he? A family. More and more Kris was feeling the urge to make that final commitment to Adam. We’ve been together almost eight months now…is that really long enough? Taking such a big step was scary but at the same time, he couldn’t deny the yearning that flooded his soul at times such as these. But we can’t even get legally married in California, we’d have to go to Canada or something. We could register for a domestic partnership here, though. Wow.

“Kris?”

He looked up to see Adam still holding Fifi and smiling softly at him.

“You with me, babe?”

“Yeah,” Kris replied, shaking the wisps of the blissful daydream from his mind. “Just thinking… umm, okay fine then, we can leave her out at night, but I swear the minute you choose cuddling her instead of me in bed…she’s going right back into her room.”

“Oooh, bossy,” Adam said with a raised brow. “Too bad you went soft,” he smirked, eying the deflated tent of Kris’ boxer shorts.

Oh he is so asking for it. After their little tryst in the fitting room last night, Kris was even more eager to show Adam the meaning of ‘wild child.’ He walked up to the smug man, took Fifi from his arms and put her on the floor. “She’s going outside and you’re going into the bedroom.”

“Is that so?” Adam challenged.

“It is.”

They played a silent, teasing battle of wills, each man doing his best to devour the other with eyes alone. Black pupils expanded to overtake blue and brown until Adam and Kris were panting and
hard without having touched each other. Fifi yipped once to get their attention and they moved to take care of her, but the fire between them did not dissipate. Once she was fed and romping around outside the couple practically raced to the bed and began a sort of kissing, humping, grinding wrestling match. Growling and groaning, they withered and bucked while attempting gain the upper hand.

Kris couldn’t tell whose heart was pounding harder, all he knew was lust and love and oh my fucking god did he ever want to pin Adam to the bed and take him like a wild beast. Some distant part of his brain marveled at how this kind of rough play would’ve triggered a flashback in Adam months ago. He rolled them over, snarled and licked his lover’s face from chin to brow. “Hot, so hot…so fucking hot.” He was powerful, full of confidence and it all went into the thrusting of his hips, fast and sure and devastating.

Adam moaned loudly and finally gave in to Kris’ toppy behavior as they rutted like horny teenagers and sucked on each other’s tongues. Pulsing, needy cocks rubbed together over and over again. “Kris…oh god…oh my g-” Adam dug his nails into Kris’ back – hard.

“How the hell did this happen?” Kris gasped, arching and tensing every muscle at the same time that Adam exploded. Twin jets of cum erupted with the shuddering and twitching of sweat-slicked bodies.

Two minutes had to pass before Kris could finally speak. “Holy shit…just-” But the amazement on his lips was suddenly stolen away. Without warning Adam tackled him to the bed and bit his shoulder so viciously that Kris let out a cry of pain mixed with pleasure. “Adam!” His boxers were ripped away and he found himself with another raging hard on.

“Come for me,” said the wolf as he began to jerk Kris off, “come for me…come for me…come…” Kris’ eyes rolled back in submissive ecstasy, his entire body thrumming to the devil’s commanding mantra in perfect obedience….perfect…perfect… “Yes!”

“That’s right, my love, more…more…” Adam’s hand was a blur of motion, milking every last drop of pearly liquid that was left in Kris’ balls and undoing the poor man entirely. He didn’t stop after Kris came, just kept right on pumping Kris’ soft dick with a wicked gleam in his eye until it started to harden again.

“What are you…oh my god…fuck!” Kris’ oversensitive nerves protested and simultaneously demanded more, sending him into a flailing mess with the sensations coursing through his body. Adam chuckled deeply as Kris’ seed dribbled down his fingers, slicking and snicking and clicking it with every stroke, faster and faster, unmercifully whispering words of sex into Kris’ wailing mouth. Kris had to come, he fucking had to, but there was nothing to expel. Instead his body went absolutely rigid for about three seconds and then convulsed into a tight ball of trembling flesh before giving out completely.

Great puffs of air rushed in and out of his lungs as he lay there with his head swimming in stars, utterly spent and blown away. A soft kiss landed on his cheek and he opened his eyes.

Adam was hovering over him, a cocky smile splayed on his lips as he said, “I win.”

***
After watching Adam skip out of the apartment for his morning run, Kris fell asleep almost immediately. “Punk,” he murmured fondly as he drifted off thinking about his lover.

When his alarm clock went off at nine, the smell of bacon reached his nose and pulled him right out of bed like a cartoon character being lassoed and dragged into the kitchen by an aroma come to life. *I’m so in love. He made bacon, real bacon and not that pretend healthy crap.*

“Oh my god,” Adam laughed when he saw Kris standing there naked, hair sticking up everywhere and dried cum still glued to his body. “You look so blissed out, my cute little angel, but you might want to put something on since all the blinds are open.”

With a jolt Kris realized that he was giving quite a show to anyone who might be walking by the window. He quickly disappeared into the bedroom and returned wearing sweat pants. “God, I reek. Bacon first, then shower. You are the man of my dreams.”

Adam chuckled as he picked up a pair of tongs and turned over the sizzling meat in the pan. The ever-present Fifi was at his ankles looking up at him hopefully. “This stuff is horrible for you,” he said to Kris, “but I figured you could use some extra protein after this morning.” He winked and they shared a silly smile. “Mind you, I did consider adding protein powder to your eggs, but—”

“Eww, that stuff tastes like chalk. I can’t believe I let you talk me into trying it before.”

“Yeah, that’s exactly the reaction I thought I’d get, so bacon it is. You’re welcome.”

Kris clapped his hands in excitement and planted a big kiss on Adam’s mouth. Sure, he could make a meal like this for himself if he wanted to, but it was more special (and tastier) when Adam did it. They were half way through breakfast when ‘Ain’t No Sunshine’ a la Kris Allen began to blare from Adam’s phone.

“Hello? Oh, hi Sheila.”

Kris continued to munch on the tender bacon crisped to perfection and decided to have Adam show him how to make it turn out just right. *I should learn to cook more anyway. I bet Leila could teach me a thing or two, like how to make Adam’s favorite meals.*

“Sorry to hear that. Sure, okay that sounds fine. Uh-huh, see you next week.” A storm was brewing on Adam’s face as he tossed his phone onto the counter. “Damn it.”

“What’s up?”

“Sheila is sick and had to cancel our session for this afternoon.”

“That sucks.”

“It more than sucks. How can she be sick now? I was going to tell her about when I passed out and how I killed them and about the ocean and practicing social skills and friendships and she was going to be proud of me and now I can’t tell her until next week! She’s not allowed to be sick, she’s my therapist! And I need her help with my dad, too!”

Kris put down his fork. “Your dad?”
“It’s nothing,” grumbled Adam, “we had a fight while you were gone.”

“Really, over what?”

“Nothing. Don’t worry about it,” said Adam, scowling and running his fingers through his hair in obvious frustration.

At this point in their relationship Kris was surprised that Adam wouldn’t say what the fight was about and it made him uneasy. The only time he doesn’t tell me something is when he thinks it’ll upset me. “Adam, come on, I’m not that fragile you know.”

“Don’t, Kris. I can’t talk about it now anyway. I have to go to work.”

“But…” He frowned, sticking out his bottom lip and looking adorably cute on purpose. Hey if it works… And it did. Adam sighed and swept him up into a giant hug saying, “no fair using the pout. You know I can’t resist it. Fine I’ll tell you but later, when I get home okay?” Kris happily agreed and tried to reassure him about Sheila being out sick. “She’ll still be proud of you next week.”

“I know, but I was so excited for today.” A grin the size of Arkansas bounced onto Kris’ face and stayed there until Adam started laughing at him. “Why are you smiling like that?”

Kris giggled before answering, “You’re proud of yourself, I can see it and that’s just really damn awesome.”

“Of course I am, I killed my attackers and stood at the ocean without fear. That has to mean something big, right? I bet I could go to the beach now and be fine.”

Kris’ smile slipped but he tried not to let his face show anything but encouragement. “You really think so?”

“Yeah, don’t you?”

Shit. If I say yes then maybe he’ll try it and have another flashback, but if I say no he’ll think I don’t believe in him. What if he’s right though? You’re supposed to be supporting him. But can he really be fine at the beach? I don’t want him to be mad at me if I show any doubt. These thoughts went through Kris’ mind in less than a second and so far Adam was just looking at him with a pleasantly curious expression. The battle of a people pleaser seemed to be never-ending. Every time Kris thought he’d finally kicked it’s ass, it came back to taunt him. Just be honest. He won’t stop loving you even if he gets mad, you know that. “I think…well if you feel so confident about it then maybe you’re right, but I’d hate to see you rush out there and…and…”

Adam’s mouth turned down, but thankfully he didn’t look angry. “I won’t have a flashback, Kris, I just know it. I can listen to the recorded ocean sounds for a long time now.” A thought seemed to occur to him and he suddenly brightened. “Maybe Sheila was supposed to be sick today so I could go to the beach after work instead! I’ll go to Venice Beech by the Pier in Santa Monica and three o’clock would be perfect because the sun is still up real high.” He beamed. “It’s fate!”

Kris felt his stomach lurch. “You want to go by yourself? Adam, I don’t think-”

“You don’t think I can do it.” It wasn’t a question.

Kris kicked himself for making Adam’s excitement disappear, but he couldn’t help it; he was
suddenly scared for his love. With a twist of guilt he wished that the critical internal voice Adam talked about, the one he hated, would make an appearance to slow things down and give Adam pause. Or a least a voice of reason. “No it’s not that, I mean…let me come with you. Wait until I get off work and we can go together. How about that? We’ll still have plenty of daylight left.”

“I don’t need your handholding.” That was definitely anger. Adam began tossing dirty dishes and pans into the sink. “I’m going to work now and then I’m going to the beach. It doesn’t matter if you don’t believe in me.”

“I do believe in you! How can you say that after all the times I’ve encouraged you? Hell, the last time we went to the ocean I’m the one who pushed you too far!”

But Adam wasn’t listening. He continued to bang around in the kitchen and then gathered up his keys and wallet. Kris grabbed his hand before he could get out the door and tried one last time to talk some sense into him. “Please, baby, please wait for me. Just let me be there with you to support you, to…cheer you on. Please, Adam.”

Adam stopped and considered Kris. “I’ll think about it. Call you at lunch.” And then he left without another word.

Mouth hanging open, Kris watched his boyfriend drive away. If he decides to go alone, I’m ditching work early to follow him. Or I’ll call Ali and make her do it. I don’t fucking care…I’m not letting him be there by himself. Kris even thought about calling out sick and hanging around Sew Your Soul all day just in case. “Damn it!” He kicked a pair of shoes by the door and a soft whine alerted him to Fifi’s presence.

“This isn’t like him, girl,” Kris said as he picked her up and went to sit down on the couch to cool down and gather his thoughts. He began to pet Fifi, drawing comfort from her warm little body. “When I first met Adam he used to plan things out and now…I mean change is good, I’m glad that he’s more spontaneous and feels confident, but…” The puppy licked his hand and he sighed. “I just love him so much. If something happens I need to be there to help him. You understand that, right?” He looked down into her large eyes and saw nothing but the pure loyalty and love of a dog for its owner. No worries, no fears. Sometimes he wished love could be that simple between humans.

In the end Kris got ready for work feeling certain that Adam would call him with a decision and he’d figure out what to do then. He knew he’d have to focus all of his attention on performing to distract himself from worrying until his phone rang. Fortunately, that part turned out to be easier than he’d anticipated.

Ever since he’d started working at Ground Zero café two and a half weeks ago, Kris felt like he was finally on the right path to his goal. His education in music theory served as a good foundation to help him write songs, but Kris was a natural and now he had a venue to perform his works. As soon as his fingers touched the guitar strings he was gone, wrapped in his own little world of harmony and lyric that he tried to share with the audience. Sometimes he forgot they were there, but this made his performances feel even more intimate, as if everyone had been invited to witness a very private moment. They tried not to clink their coffee mugs too loudly and shushed anyone who talked during Kris’ songs.

Students chatted in the hallways, telling their friends to go check out the new guy at Ground Zero. Business began to boom and soon the café owner had to purchase a number of beanbags, cushions and large pillows for extra seating. The girl who’d flirted with Kris on his first day voluntarily started doing PR for him in the student newspaper and posted fliers around campus with his photo and
A fair number of girls came to check him out just because he was cute, but many of them stayed to listen even after hearing the disappointing news that he didn’t play for their team. Kris knew that he could allow himself to be content with this, to never dream of bigger things than a stage at a college coffee shop because it was less risky. But that wouldn’t fit with the burgeoning wild child who someday wanted to go skydiving, a person who had opinions about things, who could take on a man like Adam Lambert, who liked it rough and who was brave and never boring.

Fuck no. I’m going all the way to the fucking top!

As he dug into the depths of a new song he’d written recently about standing up to loved ones, Kris was able to temporarily soothe away his worry about Adam with the words, “I’m loving the judging, gives me a chance to you what I’m made of, so bring it on, just bring it right on, I’m not who you thought I was after all…”

Pappy’s heart-shaped rock was warm in his pocket.

***

‘I’m going alone.’

Kris stared at his the text on his phone. “Fuck fuck fuck!” He punched Adam’s name and waited three rings.

“I’m not changing my mind, Kris.”

“But--”

“No, I’m going to do this by myself and you can’t stop me. Today I saw a customer who reminded me of Sam and I didn’t freak out. I’m doing this.”

Kris was sure Adam could hear the grinding of his teeth over the line. “How far? All the way to the water?”

“Duh, I’m not stupid. I’m just gonna walk by, maybe dip a toe into the sand.”

This sounded better than what Kris had imagined, but he was still worried that Adam might end up having a flashback in public and no one would be there to help him. “And what if--”

“That’s not going to happen, but if by some chance it does then I’ll use my coping skills. I’ll bring an ice pack with me.”

Okay, so Adam had obviously had time to do a little thinking and planning. That’s good…an ice pack is a good idea. Maybe I shouldn’t follow him after all. “You promise?”

“Yeah.” Adam’s tone softened. “I’ll walk with my eyes focused on my bracelet if I have to. Just one time and then I’ll go home. Kris, I need to do this for myself. I need to see…where I’m at. I’m sorry I got mad earlier. I know you love me and support me and that you’re just worried, but please don’t interfere.”
Kris wrestled with himself, with the desire to protect Adam and respect his wishes at the same time. It was like two tiny angels had fluttered down and sat on Kris’ shoulders. Both of them adjusted their halos and began to eloquently argue their points until Kris heard the words come out of his mouth, “I won’t. I love you, baby, and I’m proud of you. Go kick some ass.” The defeated angel ruffled his wings indignantly and flew off with his nose in the air as if to say, ‘you’ll be sorry.’

“Love you,” said Adam. “I’ll text you when I’m done and I’ll be home when you get there. We can watch American Idol after dinner. Wait till you see what I picked out for Ryan to wear!”

“Can’t wait,” Kris replied with a decent attempt at enthusiasm. “Love you, too.”

They hung up after another round of schmoop and then Kris had to gear himself up to perform. It took more energy this time to forget his concerns but he finally got into a good mental space when the audience started calling for requests. The hours flew by and before he knew it, the large clock on the wall said three-thirty. Kris took a break; he had to. “Back in ten,” he said to the crowd.

Adam is probably there right now. God, please let him be okay. The small green room in the back was actually a hideous sort of orangy-yellow, which went perfectly with the emotions slithering around in Kris’ gut like citrus colored, poisonous snakes. He sat down on a beat up couch and tried to breathe normally.

Fine, he’ll be fine. He’s come a long way. What the worst that could happen? Kris’ eyes suddenly went wide as he considered all the possibilities and immediately stopped that train of thought.

He clung to his guitar, “speak to me, baby,” and his calloused fingertips began to pluck out a soothing tune, unfamiliar but delicate like a lullaby. “Love will get you through the darkest times,” he murmured to the melody, hoping that somehow he and Adam were connected in some mystical way and that he’d magically be able to tell if something was wrong.

“Kris, I need you back on stage.”

He sighed deeply and returned to work.

No text messages made his phone vibrate for the next hour and a half and at five o’clock Kris all but ran out of Ground Zero, forgoing the opportunity to mingle and promote his music. Why hasn’t he texted me? Kris called Adam and got his voice mail. Okay don’t panic, he’s probably on the phone with someone else. Don’t. Panic. Once he reached his car Kris didn’t know if he should go home or to the Pier; they were both a twenty minute drive away but not in the same direction. He tried Adam’s cell again. “Baby, it’s me. Please call me and tell me you’re okay as soon as you get this message. I need you to tell me where you are because I’m starting to worry. Please call me. I love you.”

Five minutes went by. “Fuck it.” He drove to the Pier and started looking for Adam’s car, but it was like trying to find a needle in a haystack. There were so many vehicles, so many people. A sense of helplessness slowly wriggled its way into his being. “Where are you, baby? Where are you?” Just when the tears began to roll down his cheeks, his cell phone finally rang and Adam’s gorgeous face appeared on the screen.

“Oh thank god! Where are you?”

“Angel, I’m so sorry I forgot to text you and--”

“Are you okay? Are you at home?”
“I’m all right now and I’m at park with Tabby and her mom.”

There was too much in this sentence for Kris to absorb all at once. “Now? You mean you weren’t okay before? Who’s Tabby? What Park? Adam—”

“Tabby is the little girl who came into Sew Your Soul on my first day. I ran into her and her mom at the Pier and well, they kind of helped me out. But it’s fine. We’re having a picnic and I was just pushing Tabby on the swings. I turned my phone off earlier because I kept wanting to call you and chicken out and I just remembered to turn it on.”

Now that he knew Adam was safe, Kris felt a stab of annoyance mixed in with his relief. “You scared the shit out of me!”

“I know, I know! I’m so sorry, baby, really. I didn’t mean to.”

“I’m at the Pier you know, I came looking for you,” he grumped.

There was a few seconds of strained silence and then Adam, his voice meek, finally spoke. “Kris, please don’t be mad. When I tell you what happened maybe you’ll understand. Will you come to the park?”

“Of course I will,” he said more calmly, feeling a bit guilty for having yelled when he didn’t know what Adam had gone through. “How do I get to you?” He listened as Adam gave him directions. It was a simple enough walk. “Don’t you dare move. I’ll be there in ten minutes.”

Concrete, sand, more asphalt and finally grass – his jogging feet met them all eagerly and soon he was flat out running, desperate to hug Adam and shake him soundly at the same time. Kris heard his lover’s laugh first, then he rounded a bend and saw Adam sitting on the ground cross-legged with a little girl. A smiling woman was reading on a nearby blanket.

“Yes I would love some more tea, Miss Tabby. Grass and dirt tea happens to be my favorite flavor, you know.”

“And doesn’t Becky make the best tea?”

“Absolutely. Best tea ever made by a dog.”

They giggled and Kris felt his heart flip flop despite the adrenaline still speeding through his veins. He’s gonna be such a good daddy some day. He slowed down to a walk.

“Kris!” Adam shot up and rushed at Kris, who was all too happy to embrace him.

“You’re okay, you’re okay,” he mumbled into Adam’s neck, his nervous system finally simmering down at the physical contact and reassurance.

Adam stroked his hair. “Sshhh, it’s all right. I’m fine now.”

“You keep saying ‘now.’ Tell me what happened.”

“In a minute,” Adam whispered before pulling away. “Kris, this is Tabby and her mother, Naomi.”
Kris inclined his head toward them both, wondering what their role had been in helping Adam.
“Nice to meet you.”

“Is that your brother?” asked Tabby, still sipping her ‘tea’ from a piece of bark.

Adam chuckled. “No, Kris is my boyfriend.”

She goggled at Adam. “You have a girlfriend that’s a boy?”

At this, all three adults started laughing loudly. Adam and Kris doubled over while Naomi put down her book and swept up her daughter in a hug. Tabby began to sniffle. “But momma, if Adam has a girlfriend already, that means I can’t be his girlfriend.”

“Oh my god,” chuckled Kris, wiping the tears of mirth from his eyes, “she is too precious.”

“Tell me about it,” Adam giggled. He squatted down next to Tabby, put a finger under her chin and said, “sweetie, Kris is my boyfriend but you can be my girlfriend anytime.” That got him a wide grin. “Me and Kris have to go home now, but how about you stop by my store again soon?”

“Okay! Can we momma?”

“Sure, sweetheart.” Naomi stood up and gave Adam a hug. “Don’t forget what I said,” she told him, making Kris even more curious.

“I won’t. Thank you.”

“Bye Adam, bye Adam’s boyfriend!” called Tabby.

Kris waved at her, said goodbye to Naomi and then left with Adam, still itching to know every last detail of the story that had ended with Adam enjoying a tea party in the park.

Chapter 64

“Oh my god! You WHAT?” Kris’ mouth fell open and a storm of disbelief and anger began to brew in his beautiful eyes. “You said you were just going to do a walk by…one time!”

Adam cringed. This was not the response he’d been hoping for. Kris will understand once he hears the whole story. He sat up straighter and ran his fingers through his freshly washed hair. “And I did and it was all right. I was sure I could handle the secluded part of the beach and I--”

“I can’t believe this! There was no one else there? And where’s your ice pack, you said you would bring one!”

“Will you please let me finish?”

Kris crossed his arms, sat back on the couch and gave Adam a curt nod.

“Thank you.” Adam closed his eyes to collect his thoughts and the scene came back to him.
immediately. Cocky and confident after only having to take a few deep breaths to make it past a stretch of public beach near the Pier, he’d continued to stroll until reaching a quiet, nearly deserted section. “And then I stood there on the sidewalk looking out over the sand and the ocean,” he told Kris. “It was so beautiful, so quiet, but…”

Kris’ hard face softened somewhat. “What happened?”

“The details are a little fuzzy, but I remember throwing up and then I ran.” The horror he’d felt in that moment, the physical pain accompanying the memories had been staggering. Both ice packs had fallen from his trembling fingers as he’d tried to escape the onset of a flashback. *Coward. No! I was brave and it all turned out okay!* Adam gritted his teeth and waited until his mind was calm again before glancing up. He saw the glimmer of tears in lover’s eyes, but Kris’ mouth was still thin with anger. *Just keep talking.* “I ran the wrong way, I didn’t know what I was doing…I was kinda out of it and I ran towards the water, right into it actually.”

“Adam!” Wide eyed, Kris launched himself at Adam and threw his arms around him. “What were you thinking? Oh my god, oh my god!” He squeezed Adam so hard that the taller man started to wince in pain.

“Angel, it’s okay, I’m okay now,” he tried to assure him.

“It’s not okay!” Kris yelled, pulling away and looking furious. “You should have let me come with you!”

“I told you I needed to do this by myself,” Adam huffed. *Why is he being like this?*

“Yeah, and look what happened? You could have drowned!”

Irritation set in. “Stop yelling! You haven’t even heard the whole story. Jesus! I thought you’d be more supportive.”

A flicker of what looked like guilt flashed across Kris’ features, but then it was gone. “I’d be supportive if you used your head! Shit, Adam! Why didn’t you go home after having success with the Pier? We could’ve gone to the quiet beach together!”

“If you’d listen I’d tell you. Fuck! I don’t need this you know, it’s hard enough without you getting all pissed off!”

“I worried about you all day,” Kris growled, “and then you didn’t even have the decency to call me-”

“I already said I was sorry about--”

“And then I find out that you acted like an idiot--”

“Shut up!” Adam stood up, his fists clenched into tight balls. “Who the fuck do you think you are? You have no idea what I went through, none!”

Kris leapt to his feet. “I know that I was scared shitless! I know that you could have fucking died, Adam!” And with that he stormed out of the apartment and slammed the door behind him.

“Shit! Fuck, fuck, fuck!” Adam kicked the coffee table. “I was going to make you proud of me!” he
yelled at the door. Tears pricked at his eyes as he stood there feeling utterly rejected by the one person he thought he could always count on. Any anger still pulsing beneath the surface vanished, swallowed up by the intense hurt constricting his chest like a vice. Adam fell to his knees, covered his face with his hands and began to sob. Large drops rolled down his cheeks and dripped from his wrists. In the back of his brain the terrible phrase, ‘damaged freak,’ started echoing loudly, cackling and shouting ‘I told you so!’ Adam didn’t have the energy to fight it. “He’s going to leave me. Alone,” he cried, “I’ll be alone again…forever.” He sat back on his heels, devastated.

But suddenly Kris came racing back inside, his face stricken as he pulled Adam up into his arms. Adam clung to him, barely able to hold his own weight. “Don’t leave me, angel, please I won’t do it again, I promise.”

“Oh my god, baby, I’m so sorry. I’m never gonna leave you, never never never. I’m sorry. I got scared.” Kris helped Adam get to the couch and started rocking him gently. “So sorry,” he whispered as he hugged Adam to his chest.

Baby. Adam curled in on himself and ignored the thought. He was desperate for Kris’ comfort and reassurance despite the fact that rational thought was beginning to return to him. Those calloused fingers felt so nice in his hair. “Don’t leave.” Deep down he knew Kris wouldn’t, but he wanted to hear it anyway.

“Shhh, I won’t. I want to be with you for the rest of my life, Adam. I’m not going anywhere. We’re going to get married and have children and grow old together. I promise.”

“Married?” Adam snuffled as he let Kris raise his chin so that their eyes met. “You want to marry me?”

“Oh of course I do.”

They gazed at each other silently for a long moment while Adam felt his emotions – hope, anger, love, fear, hurt, and excitement – ripple throughout his being, each one vying for his attention. He saw that Kris’ face was tearstained, too. Good. The hurt and anger were winning at the moment even though part of him was absolutely giddy at the prospect of marriage. I wonder if he really meant that.

“That’s why I got so mad,” said Kris after a while. “I can’t lose you, I love you.”

“You’ve got a lousy way of showing it sometimes,” he replied, sitting up and making a grab for the tissue box on the coffee table. “Don’t you ever walk out on me like that again.” Adam blew his nose, feeling like a bit of a hypocrite as he suddenly recalled the number of times he’d stormed off in a fury.

“I’m sorry, but…”

Adam flopped back onto the far end of the couch opposite Kris. “What?”

“Well I know I shouldn’t have shouted or run off, but I don’t think I was wrong. I get that you’re an independent person and you feel confident about your recovery, which is so cool, but maybe you should be a little more careful.”

“You can’t advise me on this,” said Adam with a heavy sigh, “you’re not my therapist. Shit, I haven’t even finished telling you what happened.”
“I’m not trying to counsel you. Don’t you get it?” Kris leaned forward and put his hand on Adam’s knee. “What you do affects me, too. You’re my lover, my partner and I don’t know how I’d be able to function if I was constantly worrying that you might all of a sudden decide to go to a beach or something. Don’t you remember ending up in the emergency room last time? What happened to recipes and baby steps?”

These words gave Adam pause. He hadn’t really thought about how his recovery attempts would affect Kris, but there was no way he could let that stop him from doing everything in his power to get better. “I’m not abandoning baby steps, I’m just learning how to go with my gut and trust myself more. It wasn’t as spontaneous as you think, Kris. I did consider calling you or waiting for you, but it just felt right to go on alone and I don’t regret doing it even though it was really scary.” Brows furrowed, he glanced at his boyfriend. “I need your support on this. I need you to be able to handle it.”

Kris shook his head. “I can’t guarantee that I’ll handle it well all the time, but I’ll try to support you the best I can. Just…please do me a favor and always have your phone on and charged, and text or call me if you change plans. Can you give me that at least?”

“It’s a reasonable request. You know you’d ask for the same if your places were reversed. “Okay, I can do that.”

They shared a smile. Adam pulled Kris down on top of him and cupped his face. “I’m sorry I scared you. I love you.”

“I love you too, baby, and I’m sorry I acted like an ass.”

“You totally did.”

“I know,” Kris chuckled as he lowered his mouth.

The kiss was soft and tender, imbued with that slow burning, long lasting love that lives at the very base of a well-built fire. Quiet clicking sounds filled the room as their lips touched over and over, the delicate skin sticking slightly when they pulled apart each time as if it couldn’t bear to be separated from its mate. Adam never wanted to stop tasting those sweet lips, but he was itching to tell Kris everything. “Can I finish my story now?” he murmured after a minute of kissing.

“Mmmh, but then I’d like to return to this if you don’t mind.”

“Absolutely. If fact, why don’t we just lay here while I talk?” He pecked Kris’ cheek and wrapped his arms around his beautiful but sometimes stupid man, loving the weight of Kris’ body pressing into him from head to toe.

“Perfect.” Kris laid his head down on Adam’s chest and sighed. “Good thing Fifi doesn’t mind being outside so long.”

Adam snorted. “She’s thrilled to have so much time to figure out how to get around the rock perimeter. Plus there’s a new squirrel that’s been taunting her.” The two men chortled. “Okay so where was I?”

“In the ocean,” said Kris in a level voice.

“Right. Well as soon as my feet hit the cold water I snapped out of it and realized where I was. It’s
weird, I mean I was always a good swimmer before and never afraid of the actual water itself. I don’t have any bad memories of swimming and even the smell of the ocean is different when you’re in it. I probably would have been fine just going in deeper for a while and facing away from the beach.” He paused, trying to imagine what it would feel like to look at the shoreline from that perspective. “Anyway I tore across the sand and almost made it back to the sidewalk.”

Kris’ body tensed. “Almost?”

“I was so ashamed, so exhausted and I felt…hopeless.” Adam remembered it clearly, drowning in the familiar, miserable assumption that he would never be able to overcome this challenge despite the fact that he’d just successfully walked by a public beach on his own. “I collapsed behind a bunch of reeds and started bawling my head off.” If it hadn’t been for what happened after that, Adam was sure he’d be crying into Kris shoulder right then.

“Oh babe,” whispered his angel.

“But it’s okay, because that’s when Tabby found me.” Adam smiled and continued to tell Kris the story…

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“Adam is that you? How come you’re crying?”

“Because I’m scared of the beach,” he wailed without even knowing who he was talking to. He didn’t care. All he knew was that he was never going to get better. He heard some rustling and opened his eyes to see Tabby, the little girl he’d met at Sew Your Soul, squatting down beside him in a pink and yellow polka dot bathing suit. “Wha…what are you doing here, sweetie?” he said, trying to compose himself so as not to upset her, but he couldn’t stem the flow of tears. The sense of failure cut too deep.

“Don’t cry, Adam. I found this pretty rock on the beach. The beach is a nice place, not scary.” She held out her hand and showed him a black stone shining with specks of silver. “See? It’s got sparkles on it.”

“Very pretty,” he sniffled, still unable to pull it together. “Where’s your mom?

Tabby turned around, digging her toes in the sand as she did so. “Right there. She’s coming to see us. Momma, look who I found! It’s Adam and he’s really sad!”

*Oh my god.* Adam scrambled to his feet and started brushing off his wet, sandy clothes as he continued to weep.

“Hey,” said Tabby’s mom when she reached them, “are you okay?”

“Fine,” Adam lied unnecessarily through his choking cries.

The little girl put her hand in his and glanced up at her mother with large eyes.

Adam hung his head, his tears falling thick and fast as he held onto to the warmth of Tabby’s hand.
Broken. I’m broken. He wanted to run away and die of shame, but for reasons known only to the universe, he didn’t move. The fact that he was standing on a relatively empty beach at the moment without having any symptoms didn’t even occur to him. He heard the woman talking but the words did not register in his brain until she said, “hospital.” No! He let go of Tabby’s hand, stopped crying and backed away. “No, I don’t need a hospital. I’m okay.”

Tabby suddenly gasped and pointed toward a spot on the beach about twenty feet from where they were standing. “Momma! Momma! That bird is trying to steal Becky!” Immediately she took off running, her feet kicking up a cloud of sand all the way to a large blanket where a seagull was about to kidnap her stuffed dog. Tabby’s mom laughed a little as she watched her daughter dance around and flap her arms to scare the bird away.

Her curls bounced with every leap. “Shoo! Shoo, you bad bird!”

Adam had to smile at the scene. It reminded him of the times he and Neil used to chase seagulls for sport as children. The bird flew off and Tabby let out a triumphant yell at having rescued her beloved Becky. “Haha! Neener neener!”

“You seem a little calmer. My name is Naomi, by the way.”

“Huh?” He’d almost forgotten that she was there. “Oh, yeah I am, I mean nice to meet you.” The chaos destroying his insides must’ve called it a day, because all Adam felt just then was the simple delight of watching Tabby.

“Want to sit down with us on the blanket for a little bit?” she offered.

“Sure,” he heard himself saying.

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“Wait a minute,” said Kris, “you went and sat on the beach after all that?”

“Yep,” Adam giggled. “It was so amazing. As long as I kept talking and playing with Tabby and Naomi, I was okay.” A shining ball of light seemed to grow in Adam’s chest as he remembered how ‘normal’ he’d felt during that time.

Kris looked up and goggled at him. “Wow.”

“I know! And I figured out why after Naomi started telling me about how Tabby used to be deathly afraid of dogs because one bit her when she was a toddler.”

“Ummm…”

“Let me finish the story and I swear it’ll make sense when I’m done.”

“Alright.”
“So how come she’s not afraid of dogs anymore?”

“Well I didn’t want her to carry that awful memory around forever, so we started visiting friends who had really well behaved dogs. And then after a while, I bought her a puppy, a real one,” she chuckled as she patted Becky on the head. “It wasn’t enough just to get her used to being around dogs or to try to convince her that she didn’t have to be scared anymore because the bad dog was far away. She needed to build new memories, really good ones full of love and joy so she’d connect those feelings to dogs instead of fear. And it worked.”

*Well I’ll be damned. So that’s the magic recipe. No wonder I’m not passing out or having flashbacks right now.* Adam wasn’t exactly relaxed and he recognized that he’d need to leave soon, but he seemed to have unconsciously ordered the voices of despair and failure to pack their bags to make room for his childhood memories to frolic along with the new imagery of a little girl laughing in the sun.

“That’s a good story, momma. I like it when you tell it,” said Tabby, who was buried up to her shoulders in sand. “It feels good not to be scared anymore.” She beamed at Adam. “Are you done being scared of the beach now?”

*Damn, didn’t know I said that out loud before.* He blushed, unsure of what to say to her. “Ermm…”

“Sometimes it takes a little while, honey,” said Naomi, coming to Adam’s rescue even though she was looking at him in surprise. “Just like with you and dogs.”

“Ooohh yeah. But you’re not sad anymore?”

“Nope. I’m happy right now,” he said, grinning.

“Yeay!” Tabby burst out of her sand prison and started racing around the beach, causing a full, rich bubble of laughter to erupt from Adam’s belly.

“Good memories, huh?”

“Not just good, but joyous and loving and lots of them,” said Naomi, “as many as you can call to mind or create.”

*Okay that’s enough. I barely even know this lady.* “Hmm, so where’s her puppy now?”

“At home. She’s afraid of the ocean.”

The two adults looked at each other for a moment, and then fell into a fit of giggles.

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“That’s hysterical!”
“I know right? And then Tabby invited me to a tea party in the park and well, there you go!”

“I’m so proud of you, baby.”

“See! I knew you would be!” Yeay!

The couple stared at each other with hearts in their eyes until Kris adopted a sly smile.

“So does that mean you and I should start having sex on the beach?”

Adam chuckled and wrapped his legs around his lover. “Well maybe at some point, but we can at least practice for now…right on this couch.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah.” Adam’s body thrummed, an instrument finely tuned to the man on top of him.

“Well in that case…” Kris began to nibble on Adam’s ear. “Let me love you, worship your body, show you just how incredible I think you are.” He slid his hand down and circled it over Adam’s hardening member.

Adam moaned as Kris licked his neck.

Inch by inch he pushed up Adam’s t-shirt and started kissing his chest. Adam arched into it, his pulse speeding up with every touch of lips to his skin. Kris was painstakingly thorough in his attentions and Adam felt like a god, basking in the feather light touches and words of adoration. When Kris finally slithered down and licked across Adam’s exposed hip bone, a full body shiver made him stretch his arms above his head and groan with longing. “Please,” he whispered.

“Patience, lover.” Lower and lower Kris swirled his tongue, dipping it under the band of cotton fabric just inches from Adam’s straining length. Adam rolled his hips, trying to get his dick closer to its goal, much to Kris’ amusement. Chuckling wickedly, Kris continued the torture until at last Adam felt the glorious sensation of wetness and lips and oh my god he needed that mouth on every inch of his cock right fucking now.

“Angel, swallow me down…suck me…I’m begging you.”

Kris mercifully complied, pulling Adam’s sleep pants down and off before opening his mouth wide enough to take in everything Adam had to offer. Adam couldn’t help but thrust upwards. Millions of nerve endings exploded with the pleasure of Kris’ lips moving up and down as his tongue teased and explored the entire expanse of Adam’s shaft. “Taste so good…so good,” Kris hummed in between passes.

“More more, please…” Adam could already feel his orgasm building deep down inside and he had no patience to wait. He needed to come. “Faster.” Fingers threaded into Kris’ hair, he gave his body what it wanted, quick and delicious strokes. “Yes… fuck… almost there… almost…” Kris swallowed, constricting his throat tightly around Adam’s cock. “Yes!” Hot cum pumped from Adam’s slit, filling his lover’s mouth to the brim as his body contorted and spasmed.

Kris smacked his lips and grinned like the devil himself. “Now just imagine me doing that to you on a beach. Can you see it?”
It took a minute before Adam could answer because all of the hormones in his system were still having a raucous party. “Yeah,” he finally panted. “Fuck yeah.”

“Good, because next I’m gonna give you the most spectacular rimjob you’ve ever had in your life and then make love to you. And I want you to imagine the sun and the sand and the waves crashing nearby.

Adam’s eyes popped. *Fuck, just kill me now.* “Yes please.” He even grabbed his ankles ever so helpfully in anticipation and pulled his legs way back. “I’m so fucking ready.”

“Mmmm,” was all Kris said as he spread Adam’s cheeks apart and began to lick… lick… lick…

Lost, Adam got lost somewhere in the middle of blazing sunshine, saltwater, a slick hand on his length and a warm tongue thrusting inside of him over and over again. Flutters of ecstasy careened in wild abandon, touching every cell of his body and lighting them up with pleasure and love. The feelings and images swirled together like a galaxy and Adam came undone again, calling out his lover’s name in joy.

***

Adam’s head was so crammed with things to tell Sheila that he’d spent over an hour last night writing them all down while Kris massaged his feet. *Best boyfriend ever.* As he paced the waiting room on Monday morning, he kept looking down the list to make sure he hadn’t left anything out and wishing the session could be two hours instead of one. *She owes me that for being sick last week. Bet Alex wouldn’t mind if I was a little late today.*

8:20am. *Patience is overrated.*

8:25am. *Come onnnnn.*

8:30am. Adam looked away from the clock on the wall and down the hallway, craning his neck so he could see when Sheila’s door opened. After about thirty seconds he heard the doorknob turn.

“Good morning, please come in, Adam.”

He took his usual seat in her office and unfolded his paper. “I have a list.”

“Well hello to you, too,” Sheila chuckled as she settled herself opposite him.

“Sorry, it’s just that so much has happened and I’m not even sure where to start and you were sick and--” He glanced at her and blushed. “Are you feeling better?”

“I am, thank you,” she said with a smile. “Now that looks like a mighty long list to me.”

Adam chewed on his lip for a moment before responding. “Yeah, um, could we have a longer session today to, you know, make up the time we missed?” He knew as soon as he heard her sigh that the answer would be no.

“I’m afraid not, I have another client at nine-thirty. However, I’d be happy to schedule you for an
extra session this week if you feel it’s absolutely necessary. Let’s see how today goes first though, okay?"

He nodded, feeling slightly disappointed and still a bit irritated that she’d been out in the first place. *It’s not like she could help it, Adam. She did, after all, squeeze you into this slot today.* “Okay, can I start now?”

“Go right ahead. Just read it all off and then we’ll decide where to go from there.”

After a deep breath, he dove in and read from the paper like it was a shopping list. “Kris’ grandpa died and Kris went to Arkansas for the weekend. While he was gone I got into a big fight with my dad about Kris’ parents. Then later that day I passed out and killed my attackers and prayed to the universe. I had a really shitty night without Kris sleeping next to me. I’m doing better socializing with Tommy and Matt and dealing with fans. I had my first meeting with Ryan which was all right but I’m worried about the paps and privacy.” He paused for a second, checked that Sheila was still with him and then continued.

“I saw a guy who looked like Sam at work and didn’t freak out. I can listen the ocean sounds tape all day if I want. I went to the Santa Monica Pier on the day you were sick and I walked on the beach. There’s a lot more to say about that one. Also, I’m supposed to have my first recording session this weekend and I’m nervous about it. Things with Brian are working out okay but he keeps asking if he can see Kris. Kris is graduating on the twenty-second and his family is flying in and staying at my folks’ house. Oh, and I think Kris wants to get married.”

Absolute silence followed Adam’s recitation. Sheila was looking at him with her eyebrows raised. *Told her that it was a lot.* Adam felt a little better just for having said it all out loud and he relaxed back into his chair.

“Well,” Sheila finally began, “no one would argue that things have been busy for you.”

Adam snorted. “That’s an understatement. Last year around this time I was just going to work and hanging out with friends and family sometimes. That’s it.” Yeah, but you were also lonely, in denial and fucking a different guy every night. *You didn’t have Kris.* He grinned at the warmth that suddenly bloomed in his heart.

Sheila smiled. “Being busy is worth it though, I can see that on your face right now.”

He nodded, his cheeks a little flushed. “Even though I get tired of working so hard at everything, it’s definitely worth it. I’d never want to go back to the way things used to be. I feel like I have a real life now, like I’m a normal person or at least closer to being one.” The taunting voice in his head whispered something cruel, but Adam flicked it away without too much trouble. *I’m not a damaged freak anymore, right?*

Sheila’s eyes narrowed as she leaned forward in her chair. “Normal is a relative term. Struggling and trying to cope is normal for a person who suffered through what you did. As you’re facing your fears and learning how to cope in a healthier way, your life is reflecting those efforts. But you were always a normal person, always.”

Adam desperately wanted to believe that, but it wasn’t easy. Too many years had passed during which he was convinced of the opposite. He frowned at his lap. “Umm, so where should we start?”

To her credit, Sheila didn’t press the matter, perhaps knowing that it would take long time for Adam to undo those thoughts about himself.
“Well, look at your list again. Seems to me that there were some things on it that you just wanted to report but we don’t really need to talk about in depth today.”

He took her advice, discovered that she was right and crossed out several points with the pen Sheila offered him. “Then I want to talk about killing my attackers first.”

“Alright, tell me what happened in as much detail as you can remember.”

As he spoke Adam felt like he was there again, standing on the shoreline with the dead, insignificant bodies behind him and the peace of the ocean before him. “It felt so real,” he said when he’d finished describing his prayer to the universe, “and I wasn’t afraid at all.”

“That is tremendous! It tells me that you’re taking control of your fears, taking the power away from your attackers,” she said with a huge grin. “And you’ve come to understand that the real power in your life is love. Adam, congratulations!”

Adam beamed like a proud peacock, basking in her praise and his own sense of accomplishment. “And does it…does this mean that I’m cured?”

“I think you already know the answer to that question,” said Sheila calmly, still smiling widely at him. “It’s not a matter of being sick or cured, you’re healthier now than you used to be and you will continue to become even more so. Think about the difficult recipe, for example. Even when you’ve finally managed to get it right, you continue to work at it so you can get it right more frequently and with fewer stumbles. You start to perfect it and even change the recipe to fit your individual taste.”

Adam had known this all along, of course, but he still wished he could have some sort of diploma to officially declare him ‘healed.’ She must have seen the look of disappointment climb onto his face, because she continued with, “that shouldn’t stop you from celebrating your achievements. Just look at what you’ve accomplished in the past year! And I imagine that you’re not having as many symptoms.”

“Yeah actually that’s true,” said Adam, and then started recounting last week’s adventures. When he got to the part about sitting on the beach and letting good memories flood his brain, he rose from his chair and began to pace excitedly. “Every time something bad tried to creep into my head, I concentrated on Tabby or thought about my childhood and it worked! How come you never told me I was supposed to do that?”

Sheila’s pride in her patient was obvious. “First of all, I think another congratulations is in order. What you’ve done is nothing short of remarkable.”

I think adults should get stickers that say ‘excellent job,’ too, not just kids. I want one. “Thank you, I do kinda rule, don’t I?”

“Yes, yes you do,” she chuckled. “Now as far as your question to me, I honestly wasn’t sure if you were ready for that yet. You have a tendency to push yourself, and I was concerned that you might run too fast with that information.”

Adam came to a halt and gaped at her. “You withheld something that could’ve helped me? How… how could you do that?” I’d be lying on the beach all day by now! His hands trembled and his eyes flashed with irritation, but Sheila didn’t seemed flustered by this.

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“I imagine if, when we made your treatment plan months ago, I’d told you that one of the keys to
overcoming your fear of the ocean was to replace the bad memories with good ones. What would you have done? Think about it carefully.”

But Adam didn’t have to think carefully because the answer was ridiculously obvious after only a second of consideration. “I’d have run to the beach and tried to make myself think of good memories.” He plopped back into his chair and let the anger fade away. “It would’ve been a disaster.” Fine, so she does know what she’s doing. “Sorry,” he said a bit sheepishly.

“It’s quite all right, and what you’ve told me so far indicates that you are indeed ready to practice those skills, but Adam, please don’t overdo it. If you’re struggling and you force yourself too hard to make new memories or recall old ones, it may backfire and set you back.” Her features were creased in concern. “Try it out slowly at first and do it purposefully. Make plans for new experiences and go to the beach with specific images from your childhood in your mind at the ready, just in case you’re having trouble coming up with some in the moment.”

Adam let the words sink in. Sheila’s advice was perfect for the part of him that liked to be in control, but what about going with his gut? “I want to learn to trust my instincts though. I felt confident doing that last week and it worked out.”

“And believe me, I’m absolutely thrilled. I want you to continue to do that if you feel moved, just have a back up plan, okay?”

That felt good. “Yeah, okay.” There was one other thing he wanted to say on the subject before moving on. “Me and Kris had a fight about it. He yelled at me and left the apartment for a while because he got scared when I didn’t call him and he couldn’t reach me.”

“I imagine he did,” said Sheila, and Adam had the feeling she was about to take Kris’ side.

“Don’t defend him,” he said quickly before she could speak, “so he was scared, but he had no right to act like a jerk, shouting like that and abandoning me.”

“Abandoning you?” She peered at him keenly, her green eyes speaking volumes.

Dammit. I really hate her sometimes. “I got emotional, irrational, and I thought he’d leave me.” He cringed. “I know it’s not true and we made up and I promised to keep my phone on all the time and to let him know if my plans change. But…he still shouldn’t have yelled at me.”

“No, he shouldn’t have.”

“It is pretty cool that he could yell at me though, I mean considering how hard that would’ve been for him when we first met.”

“Indeed it is,” she said, smiling again, and there was nothing more that needed to be said on the matter.

They covered a few more subjects and before the session ended, Adam had a better idea how to reconcile with his father and what to say to Brian about the boy’s obsession with Kris. Adam saved the best topic for last. “Kris wants to get married,” he told his therapist, unable to contain the little giggle bubbling from his lips. “I mean he hasn’t proposed or anything, but he’s brought it up a few times. I think he’s serious.” At the thought of this, Adam’s whole body shuddered from head to toe, happiness leaping up and down his spine like a fawn that’d just found its running legs. He giggled again.
“Well I can’t remember the last time I’ve seen you smile like that. Your whole face is lit up like a child’s on Christmas morning,” said Sheila, her eyes twinkling.

Obviously Adam would like nothing more in the world than to make a lifetime commitment to Kris, but he’d purposefully avoided thinking about the subject too much. His heart might break into a thousand million pieces if, for some bizarre reason, things didn’t work out the way he wanted them to. But now that Kris had started bringing it up, Adam found himself getting lost in wedding fantasies. “It’s not too soon, right?”

“You asked me that same question about letting Kris into your apartment for the first time, and I have the same answer for you now as I did then.”

“You can’t tell me if it’s too soon. I have to decided that for myself,” he responded, playfully rolling his eyes. “Well I’d marry him tomorrow, only I want a huge, elaborate, epic, sparkly wedding and that’s gonna take some planning.” Talking about this with Sheila made it feel like a real possibility, made Adam want to jump up and start doing cartwheels and squeal like a little girl. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined he’d find such love. At Macy’s. He snorted, a little too enthusiastically, and started coughing.

Sheila absolutely cackled, then got him a glass of water and some tissue for his tears of joy.

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As Adam drove to work, his heart felt so light that he could imagine it drifting out of his chest and bragging to the world. Take that! it would shout, I win. I WIN! He bounced into Sew Your Soul and threw everyone in there, customers included, a ridiculously huge smile. “Good morning!” he crowed before heading over to Tommy.

“Err good morning to you, too. You look happy.” Tommy brushed his hair from his face, revealing a bruise on his cheek.

“Whoa, what happened?” asked Adam, walking behind the counter.

“Got into a little fight with the frontman of my band. No big deal. He’s just an ass.”

Adam didn’t pry any further, wanting to respect Tommy’s privacy, but he liked that he felt concern for the man. He’s my friend now. Oh shit, I never followed up on going to see him play! Damnit. “Hey that reminds me, sorry I haven’t been to your show.”

Tommy shrugged.

“When’s the next one?”

“Saturday, but don’t worry about it, you’ve got your own set to do that night.”

Cute elfish faces should not be allowed to look so forlorn, and Adam was suddenly determined to be as good a friend to Tommy as the man had been to him. “What time?”
“Seven.”

“But that’s perfect! I don’t go on until later so…so me and Kris will be there for sure, okay?” Ahh, that got a smile, much better.

“Really?” Tommy’s eyes were hopeful.

“Absolutely.”

“Awesome, really fucking awesome, and you’ve got to tell me what you think of Russell.”

“Is he the ass?”

“Yup.”

“Then I’m sure I’ll hate him.”

Tommy beamed.

Back in the studio, Adam found Alex in his usual spot behind the drawing board and ‘the jacket’ draped on the mannequin as always. He nodded at the pair of sky blue eyes that had popped up in greeting, then went to say hello to his jacket. Some might think it was a silly ritual, Adam touching the shoulder reverently and murmuring promises of ownership, but it made him feel calm and focused. It was particularly helpful in light of the upcoming event with Ryan Seacrest at the end of the month, because every time Adam thought about it his stomach started somersaulting with nerves. This morning, however, his being was full to the brim with Krissy love and not much else.

The first half of his shift passed rather uneventfully, the biggest excitement being that Alex finally agreed to let Adam organize one fourth of the studio for his use. He didn’t hesitate to dive into the project and by the time he was scheduled to relieve Tommy for lunch, he was nearly done. With needles sorted from pins, fabric organized by type and color and the sewing implements properly stored, Adam strolled out in to the store. “Get a burrito for me would ya?” he asked Tommy. “And tell them to put more chili peppers in it this time, I like it spicy.”

“Sure thing, just don’t blame me if you burn Kris’ tongue tonight,” his friend teased.

“Haha. Now get out of here, I’ve got customers waiting for my smile.”

Tommy laughed and then left for the taco stand down the street while Adam geared up for his daily game of fashion critiquing. He himself had chosen a particularly tight pair of skinny jeans when dressing this morning, and the stares he was getting from men and women alike only served to further buoy his mood. Hey I can’t help it if God spent a little extra time on some of my body parts.

Adam was just congratulating himself for making it through a sales interaction with a guy his age when a brick came crashing through the window and missed his head by inches. He felt the hair on his neck flutter as it passed, slammed into the wall behind him and fell to the floor with a loud thud that was lost in the shrill wails of the security alarm.

There was a squeal of tires. “FAGGOT!”

And then Sam started screaming in Adam’s ear. ‘Did you think I loved you, you filthy faggot! Disgusting, pathetic frea-’ No! NO! Adam clapped his hands over his head and tried not to listen, but
the memories were swift and cunning. “Fuck, I need some ice!” he yelled, completely unaware of the chaos taking place in the store, customers fleeing or yelling about homophobes while others stood in shock with glass-scratched skin. “Please…ice!” he called again, drawing on every ounce of strength he possessed to stay present in the moment, to focus on the floor beneath his feet. His knees buckled as Sam’s hateful words got louder and louder. Deserted beach, black night – pain.

He felt something freezing and wet on his forehead. Like a mouth sucking poison from a snakebite, the cold extracted everything dangerous from Adam’s mind. He gasped and opened his eyes. There stood Alex pressing a single cube of ice wrapped in a napkin to Adam’s skin.

Alex looked genuinely worried as he moved it around, apparently searching for a wound. “Where did it hit you?”

“What? It didn’t…oh.” Burning shame rose to his cheeks as he tried to control his trembling hands. “Um, just barely grazed me,” he lied, “it’s not even bleeding I don’t think.” He took the ice and held it to the side of his head. “Fucking asshole!” He kicked the brick, though he could care less about whoever had thrown it, but his play of outrage had the desired effect.

Alex’s eyes narrowed in anger. “I’m calling the police, and the customer who gave me her ice saw his license plate. That bastard is gonna pay.”

Adam glanced around and saw a young woman holding a Starbucks cup. “Iced coffee,” she said, looking stunned, “I only had one piece of ice left, h-hope it’s enough.”

“It’s perfect, thank you very much.” Still shaking slightly, Adam knelt down, picked up the brick with his free hand and read the words painted on it in white. “Die you faggot scum.” Everyone within earshot made angry or horrified sounds, but only two things registered for Adam. I can’t work here anymore. I’m a danger to the store and everyone in it. Plus I almost had a flashback. I can’t let that happen again. His second thought was even worse. The brick could’ve hit me in the head. An accident or even an attack could happen at any time just being out on the streets, but he was not about to be a sitting target. I could be dead right now. I’d be separated from Kris. Bile began to rise in his throat and he nearly doubled over.

“Are you all right?” asked Alex. “I think Tommy should take you to the hospital when he gets back from lunch, just to make sure.”

Adam had never seen so much emotion from the man. “No, I’m okay really,” he said as he straightened up and swallowed heavily. “Listen, can I talk to you for a second in private? It’s really important.”

“After the police come. I’ll close the store and then we can chat, but briefly because I need to call the insurance company and get the window repaired as fast as possible.”

He didn’t want to wait. He wanted to quit and then get the fuck away from Sew Your Soul forever. You can be patient. Call Kris. “I’ll be in the break room.”

“The police will want to question you.”

“Fine.” Kris, Kris, Kris. Adam left without another word, already pulling his phone from his back pocket. Please be on a break. He was in luck, and Kris answered after only one ring.

“Hey, babe!”
“Angel,” Adam sighed, feeling his body relax just at the sound of that sweet voice.

“What’s up?”

Adam sat down on a folding chair and ran what was left of the ice all over his scalp. He didn’t give a fuck if his hair got messed up or smelled like coffee; it felt good, calming. “Some gay hating dickwad launched a brick at my head through the window of the shop. I’m all right,” he said quickly when Kris gasped. “It didn’t hit me, but I almost had an episode.”

“Oh god, Adam. You okay? I could leave work and--”

“No, you don’t have to do that. I’m going to talk to Alex and then go home. Kris, I’m quitting.”

“What, your job?”

“Yeah. People got hurt today, got cut by flying glass, because of me. And Alex has to get a new window now. It could happen again, I could freak out or….” He trailed off, not wanting to even think about the other thing.

“But you can’t let a hate crime make you quit! That’s just giving them what they want. No way, don’t do it. You’ve gotta show them they don’t have any power. You--”

“Kris, please. I don’t want to argue about this. I just needed to hear your voice and talk to you a little while I wait for Alex. Just…how’s your day been so far?”

Silence.

“Kris?”

“You had a brick thrown at you and you want me to talk about my day?”

“Please, angel.”

A long sigh came over the line. “Alright. Well it’s actually been really good. A rep from Aware Records stopped by today to watch me perform.”

“Whoa, that’s awesome!” Adam meant it. People need to hear his music.

“Did you get to talk to him, or her? What did they say? Was it good news?”

Kris chuckled a little. “You’re very cute when you’re excited for me. Yes I talked to her just before you called and she said that she’d take a good report back to the company. She really thinks I have a shot.”

“Woohoo! God, that is fucking fantastic! You’re gonna get signed and make an album and--”

“Slow down there, one step at a time,” said Kris, but Adam could tell he was pleased and smiling. “She said I should hear from them soon.”

Even with everything that had happened, Adam felt real happiness enter the maelstrom of emotions whipping around inside of him like barely formed tornado. “You’ll get signed. I just know it.” He was about to go on, but Alex entered the room at that moment. “Hang on a sec,” he said to Kris, and
raised his eyebrows at Alex.

“The police want a report.”

“They got here fast.”

“Yeah well…” Alex shrugged, said, “The officer is waiting for you,” and left the room.

Adam reluctantly hung up with Kris and got his ass back to the scene of the crime, thinking that the sooner he did so, the sooner he could talk to Alex and get home. It took only five minutes to go over everything with the police. “Of course I want to press charges if you catch him.” He handed over the brick, which went into an evidence bag just as Tommy returned from lunch.

“Holy shit!”

Damn it, now I have to wait while Alex explains what happened. Adam paced and told Tommy he was fine at the appropriate time in the story. Finally, Alex closed the store and asked Tommy to make sure no one stole anything through the broken window while he went to talk with Adam.

“Now what’s so important that it can’t wait?”

Adam sat down at the sewing table and started playing with a tomato shaped pin cushion. “I can’t work here anymore.” He expected Alex to protest, but the words that came out of his boss’ mouth were a shock.

“That is unacceptable. I won’t allow it.” Adam’s mouth fell open. “I don’t care if I have to replace the shop window every single day, you’re not quitting.”

“But…you can’t…I mean…” Why on earth does he care so much? He can find someone else to inspire him. But what about the jacket? Shit, I have to have that.

Alex’s jaw tightened. “Come here.” And he disappeared behind his drawing board without further explanation.

Bewildered, Adam joined him and watched as the man began to reveal page after page of drawings. The clothing in the shop had nothing on these designs. Adam sucked in a sharp breath at the sight of himself wearing the most drop dead gorgeous outfits he’d ever seen. Oh.my.god.

“You can’t leave.”

Adam could only stare for a moment, eyes popping and heart longing to actually put such garments on his body. “You…you could come watch me perform every weekend. That should be enough…right?” he said breathlessly.

“No, I need you here every day. Plus, Ryan would have my head. He adores you.”

I did make him look absolutely fabulous for American Idol. Apparently fate was not going to let Adam deviate from the path it had set him on despite his fear of remaining at Sew Your Soul. As he was trying to sort out what to do, Alex kept trying to convince him.

“I’ll get bulletproof glass and stock the freezer with ice.”
Adam jumped back like he’d been burned.

“That brick didn’t touch you,” said Alex calmly, still gazing at his drawings. “I don’t care what you’ve got going on, Adam, and it’s none of my business. Tell me what you need and I’ll make sure you get it.”

_Fuck. Fuck him and his weird, socially inept, perceptive self._ Adam didn’t know if he could tolerate the battle with shame and vulnerability that he’d have to endure on a regular basis if he stayed. _But he’s not going to pry, he said so._ “Goddamn you,” he mumbled. “Fine, but I get to have some of those clothes you’re designing.”

“Deal.”

They shook hands on it. “And I want…those other things, too.”

“The window is no problem. Ice cubes or ice packs?”

“Packs, four of them.” This was probably way overcompensating, but it would put his mind at ease to know they were there and if Alex wanted him that bad then he could supply them.

“Anything else?”

“Yeah, if you ever decide that it is your business to know more about me than you need to, I’m outta here.”

They shook on that, too.

Adam spent the rest of his shift quietly sewing while Alex and Tommy cleaned up the broken glass in the shop. Just a few minutes before it was time to quit, he heard Alex arguing loudly with the window company about how he didn’t give a fuck how ridiculous and expensive it would be to install bulletproof glass for a clothing store.

A self-satisfied smile was still lingering on Adam’s lips when he left for home.

***

Two hours and twenty minutes. That’s how long it took Adam to prepare a surprise romantic evening for him and Kris. The timer for the roast duck went off only three minutes before Kris was due home from work.

“Citrus pan sauce…mmm, perfect.” Adam sucked his pinky clean, swirling his tongue around it a few times to get every last drop of the delicious orange dressing, and then took off his apron. He hurried over to the stereo, turned on some mood music and checked his reflection in the bathroom mirror one last time. “Lip gloss, half unbuttoned white shirt and tight jeans. He’ll be all over me.” After flicking a stray eyelash from his cheek, he ran his tongue over his teeth and checked his breath. “Fifi’s in her room, dinner is ready and I’m looking gorgeous.” He heard the front door open and then a moan.

“What smells so heavenly?”
Adam giggled to himself, then walked into the living room to greet his man. “Maybe it’s me,” he purred, nuzzling up to Kris and biting his ear.

Kris moaned again and nearly dropped his guitar in his hurry to crawl Adam like a tree. “You do smell amazing and god you look fucking unbelievable…give me those shiny lips before I die here.”

With a seductive smirk, Adam backed Kris up against the wall and cupped that beautiful face. “Just a little taste before dinner,” he whispered into his lover’s mouth. He kept his fingers around Kris’ jaw and ears as they kissed, open and sweet and slow. Their tongues licked each other, savoring every swipe of wet smoothness and familiar flavor. Adam felt Kris’ hands creep up the back of his shirt and splay on his skin, fingertips kneading hungrily. The air around them turned from warm to hot in seconds and their noses flared with labored breathing until Adam started to feel dizzy.

He drew back, panting, and groaned as Kris sucked on his lips until all the gloss was gone.

“Who needs dinner,” said Kris, trying to push Adam towards the bedroom.

“You do, since it took me two hours to make.” He laughed at Kris’ stunned expression and then grabbed his hand. “Come on, food before sex, and I have to tell you about therapy this morning and how I didn’t quit my job after all. And I want to hear more about the rep from Aware Records. I promise to romance you all night long after that.”

“So what’s the occasion?”

Adam shrugged. “Just felt like celebrating our awesomeness.”

Kris was suitably impressed with everything, the scrumptious meal, Adam’s story and even the ambiance of candles and soft music. They talked quietly, sometimes pausing to squeeze the other’s hand in congratulations or encouragement.

“I can’t believe it, I might actually get to record an album. It’s been my dream since I was a kid.”

“I totally believe it, you’re so talented.”

“Yeah?”

*He doubts himself? Well that’s not okay.* Adam put his glass down and leaned in. “Absolutely. Your voice is so smooth and clear, it’s like honey…and your accent comes through when you really get into it. You feel your music and it shows. A record label would not be interested unless you were really damn good and knew how to draw a crowd.”

Kris’ smile started out small, then widened to take up his whole face. “Thank you for that.”

“Any time, angel.” He got up and kissed Kris on the forehead. “I gotta let Fifi outside,” he said when their little pooch rang the bell for the third time. “Sorry girl,” he chuckled before returning to the table. “Well at least it’s warm, she’ll be happy out there for a while.”

“I’m sure she will.” Kris grinned and took a sip of wine. “I’m really glad you decided to stay at Sew Your Soul.”

“Me too, and it’s going to be so worth my while in the long run. You should’ve seen Alex’s designs!”
The man is an absolute genius. I can’t wait until they’re ready for me to wear…leather, zippers, patterns, suede and the most intricate details, it’s just…what?” Kris was staring at him like a lovesick puppy.

“You. I love watching you talk when you’re excited. Your hands go all over the place and your face just glows.”

God I love him so much that it hurts. He stood up again. “Stay right here. Don’t move, okay?” Adam put away the food and cleared the table in less than two minutes. With that done, he stalked back to the table and pulled Kris from his chair. He was about to scoop him up bridal style when Fifi started pawing at the door. Damn! Worst timing ever! But then he and Kris both looked at her and nearly fell over in shock.

“I don’t believe it!” Kris exclaimed.

“Oh my god! How on earth?”

“Should we let her in?”

“No way! I don’t want that in here!”

Fifi was beside herself. Her little body was absolutely trembling with excitement and triumph, her tail whipping back and forth as she held a dead squirrel in her mouth.

“Wha…what should we do?” Adam had never expected her to actually catch one. “She’s not going to eat, is she?” He turned to Kris, completely baffled.

“Umm, I don’t think so, it’s almost as big as she is,” Kris chuckled. “But we should probably get it from her.”

“You do it. I am not touching that thing.”

Kris snorted. “You big baby. Fine, but let me use a pair of your cleaning gloves.”

I am so throwing those out when he’s done. Good thing I have five pairs.

When Kris went outside all gloved up and holding a black trash bag, Fifi started running circles around him to show off, but the instant he tried to steal her prize she bolted. Adam stood inside and watched, laughing his ass off at Kris chasing her and shouting. “You tell her, babe!” he cackled.

After ten minutes Kris threw his hands up. “I need your help!” he panted after sliding the door open a crack. “You don’t have to touch it, just distract Fifi so I can grab her.”

“Good thing I love both of you,” Adam grumbled. “Hang on I’ll be right out.” He put a pair of gloves on, too, just in case. So much for a romantic evening.

Fifi was too clever not to know what was up. Every time Adam got near her she took off again, her eyes wide with anxiety that ‘her’ squirrel might be snatched away. Disgusted, Adam decided to play it cool and walked around the yard ignoring the pup until she stopped running. Then he sat down on a large rock and waited. Finally, Fifi came over to him, squirrel still dangling from her mouth.

“Whatcha got there, huh? Got a squirrel? What a clever girl you are,” he cooed, attempting to distract
her as Kris crept up from behind. “Such a fast and brave doggie, aren’t you?”

“Gotcha!” Kris nabbed her by the middle and she nearly dropped the dead animal in surprise. “Ahh, so close! I was hoping she’d let go of it.” He knelt down on the ground and put her flailing body in between his knees. “I’m gonna pry open her mouth as much as I can and you pull it out.”

“What! You said I didn’t have to touch it!”

“Come on, Adam, I can barely hold onto her!”

“Oh alright!”

Fifi began to snarl as Kris worked at her jaws.

“Oh my god, it’s so gross!” whined Adam.

“There!” Kris called, “grab it!”

After a few false starts Adam reached out with one hand and yanked its tail until it was finally free. He stood up and held it at arms length. “Where’s the bag…oh god ewwwww!”

Immediately Fifi tried to go after the squirrel, but Kris was too strong for her. She started whimpering. “Just put it down. I’ll get Fifi inside and come back for it.”

Adam didn’t hesitate. He opened his thumb and forefinger and let the thing fall to the ground. *Ugh! Squirrels are so much cuter when they’re alive.*

Twenty minutes later, calm was restored to the apartment. Their garbage can outside now contained one dead squirrel and two pairs of bright green cleaning gloves. Fifi still hadn’t forgiven them and lay curled up in a ball near the sliding door, pouting.

“Mood killer,” Adam huffed in her direction as he and Kris cuddled on the couch, now showered and changed into shorts.

“Aww she can’t help it. Those damn things have been teasing her for months. Besides, I hear that moods can be recreated.” Kris tilted his head up, looking at Adam mischievously. “Dance with me.” He rose from the couch, walked to the stereo and put on a remix of ‘Falling’ by Julee Cruise, which the couple had discovered was one of the best make out songs ever.

The first notes set off an immediate response in Adam’s body as if he’d been conditioned to kiss Kris every time he heard them. As the music oozed from the speakers, Kris beckoned Adam to him, his eyes dark and loving.

“Genius,” Adam murmured, sweeping his lover up in his arms and forgetting about everything but the gorgeous man plastered to his body. Pressed together from chest to knees, their lips met and danced in time to the mellow, meditative harmony and sultry beats. Adam tasted wine on Kris’ tongue and sucked it slowly while his hands walked familiar paths over slim hips and round cheeks. The lovers swayed, just a little. Adam couldn’t wait to make sweet love to his boyfriend, to pleasure him, hoping that Kris would be able to feel the depth of his devotion to him with every touch. *What did I do to deserve him?*

So unhurried were their kisses that they were able to catch enough air and exchange it back and
forth, mixing individual flavors together until they were one. Adam’s thoughts were full of his future with Kris, of wedding plans and children and buying a house together. And yet he was completely present in the moment somehow, never missing a single unspoken request from Kris for more tongue or longer caresses.

“Adam,” Kris whispered when the song was nearing the end.

That one word was all he needed. Adam drew him up from the floor, cupping his thighs and ass. Kris wrapped his arms and legs around Adam as they continued to kiss and nuzzle each other, heading for the bedroom and a night of romantic bliss.

The moon slipped behind a puff of clouds, taking most of its light away from the already dim room where Adam was gently lowering Kris to the bed. Only the silhouettes of bodies could be seen, Adam’s fingertips ghosting down Kris’ bare chest, his nails scratching slightly when Kris moaned and arched into them.

“So beautiful.” Adam took his time pulling off the plaid boxer shorts, letting the fabric brush and tease the tiny patch of brown hair that he’d come to adore. Kris shuddered, his toes curling in the dark. “Love you, angel,” Adam sighed into his lover’s thigh and inhaled the intoxicating scent of skin and arousal.

“Love…” was all Kris could get out because Adam had started to lick circles into his hipbones and pelvis. His mouth fell open a little more with every swipe of Adam’s tongue. “Tease,” he breathed.

Adam chuckled softly and rubbed his cheek up against Kris’ straining length. “You know you love it,” he whispered, then pushed his nails up that perfectly chiseled chest as he moved his mouth down onto the leaking, velvety head so desperate for his attention.

“Yessss.”

The clouds parted and the moon peeked out just in time for Adam to see an expression of pure ecstasy, Kris’ skin pale and beautiful in the moonlight. Adam’s heart surged and he suddenly scrambled up to Kris’ mouth and kissed all the air from it. With a half sob he tightened his arms around his lover, feeling suddenly overwhelmed with emotion. He couldn’t get enough. The two men started rolling around on the bed, trying to climb into each other as the passion began to rise.


“I don’t care, want you…please,” Kris begged.

“You’ve got me, just let me love you a little longer.” Adam slithered down again. “Let me taste you, lick you.”

Kris trembled, drew up his knees and let them fall open. “Want…”

All that beauty, just for me…only me. He was aching for it. Almost reverently, he thumbed apart Kris’ cheeks and licked a path across the entrance to his body. Kris gasped. Adam did it again, slowly savoring, pressing and feeling the texture on his tongue. So intimate, so perfect. He buried his face and licked all around, making love to Kris’ star as he spread him wider and wider.

Little mewls sounded in between Kris’ puffing breaths. The moon shone fully upon him now, illuminating every bite of lips and clenching of fists, one hand finally darting to the nightstand to curl
around a bottle of lube. He pushed it down insistently and Adam took the hint, popping open the cap at once. Adam knew where to go, knew how much Kris loved to be fingered, but he had to have those lips again. In and out went his tongue. In and out went his fingers. Double penetration, wet, curling, hot and slick.

And Kris was a desperate man by this time, rocking down onto Adam’s hand and kissing back hungrily. “Please please please,” he babbled after several minutes of hot foreplay.

Adam didn’t miss a beat. He was a master in the art of love making now and he gave Kris everything the man could want. His shaft entered the second his fingers were gone. “Wanna touch you, angel, make you feel me.”

“I feel…ohhh god, deeper…”

If he angled it just right, he could totally undo his lover. Pushing Kris’ legs all the way back, Adam rose to his knees and thrust deeply, swiveling his hips a little at the end.

“There, right th-there! Adam!”

Adam got lost in it, the moaning sounds and garbled words falling from Kris’ mouth, the tight heat licking his cock again and again, and above all the unadulterated love that leapt between them as their bodies moved in a seamless rhythm. Their eyes locked in the pale light, never wavering even when Adam’s flexible hips began to drive and pound into Kris. Breath and sweat and slapping skin. Digging nails. A drop of perspiration dripped from Adam’s temple. Kris licked it from his lips.

“Fall apart,” Adam pleaded, wanting to see Kris in the throes of bliss. His slippery fingers stroked him up and down, fist rising over the head and down to his balls with increasing speed. He thrust deeply.

“Lov…love youuu…oh…” Kris eyes squeezed shut and his mouth parted in that oh-my-god-this-is-the-best-thing-ever expression. His body spasmed, spilling its seed and coating Adam’s hand with pearly white cum. ‘Angel’ was the perfect word to describe him, somehow all innocence in that moment.

Nothing is as beautiful, nothing feels as amazing as bringing someone that much pleasure. And finally Adam looked away, collapsing onto his partner to kiss kiss kiss. Arms and legs wrapped around him, pulled him in even further. He cried out, shuddering with release, his length pulsing and twitching inside Kris’s body.

Then all was still except for the sound of two hearts pounding against one another.

***

Something was itchy, scratchy. Adam opened his eyes. Fifi. His cute little pup was dreaming in her sleep, chasing a squirrel probably, but puppy nails don’t feel good on bare skin. Adam pushed her away from his shoulder and went back to spooning Kris. It was Wednesday, and way too early to be up. With Fifi behind him and Kris nestled into his chest, the snuggly warmth soon lulled Adam back to sleep.
The next thing to wake him up was his phone ringing just about a minute before his alarm was due to go off.

“Wuzzat?”

“Shhh, nothing baby,” whispered Adam as he silenced his phone and switched off the alarm. “Go to sleep.” He pressed a kiss to Kris’ temple and climbed out of bed, grabbing a pair of boxer shorts before leaving the room. Fifi got up, too. His father’s picture was smiling at him from the screen. Adam tugged on his shorts and answered the phone.

“Hey, sorry to call so early, but I’ve got to be on a flight soon and I didn’t want to leave without talking to you.”

He could’ve called last night. Typical, putting it off ‘till the last minute. “It’s fine, what’s up?” He let Fifi outside and went into the kitchen to start the coffee.

Eber cleared his throat. “Um well, I uh…look, Kris’ family is coming next week and I think it’d make them uncomfortable if you and I weren’t speaking to each other.”

“Is that your way of apologizing? Nice try, dad,” said Adam as he filled up Fifi’s food and water dishes. He thought about what Sheila had told him in therapy two days ago and sighed. “You know, I get it that you’re worried about me and overprotective--”

“I am n--”

“Yes you are, don’t try to deny it. You’re the one who freaked out when I wanted to take swimming lessons as a kid.”

“You were only six!”

“Uh huh. Anyway, I get it, but you’re wrong about Kris’ parents. They don’t think I turned Kris gay or blame me for being with him.”

“I never said…I mean I…”

Hah. Gotcha. “Kim and Neil are great people. They support Kris completely even though it’s been hard for them with their relatives.” Adam waited for his father to speak. I am not apologizing until he does. Come on, old man, you can do it. He heard a long suffering sigh.

“Adam, I’m sorry I judged them, but--”

“No dad, there’s not supposed to be any ‘butts’ in an apology.”

“Fine,” Eber said with a hint of a growl. “I’m sorry.”

“Thank you, and I’m sorry I yelled and swore at you. And…I’m an adult who’s not doing half bad with his life at the moment. I’m glad you care, but you need trust that I know what I’m doing.”

Adam was sure his dad was grinding his teeth and wondering if he should give in or stubbornly plow on.

“Don’t get hurt. I love you.” And then the line went dead.
Well that was an improvement at least. Adam poured himself some coffee, took a few sips and got ready for his morning run. Before he left, he crept back into the bedroom and kissed his lover gently on the mouth. Kris snuffled and smacked his lips without waking up. Totally adorable. Adam stood there for another minute, just watching Kris sleep, thinking that he could probably do so all day long. It wasn’t until Fifi hopped up onto the bed that he snapped out of his trance and got going.

Today Adam was supposed to meet with Brian after work, and as he jogged around the neighborhood he kept a little mantra going: “Kris is not the answer, Kris is not the answer…” The kid was still downright obsessed, but overall things seemed to be improving for him. Sometimes Adam thought it was kind of ironic, being a mentor after having spent ten years as a full blown sex addict and social recluse. Although he and Kris didn’t talk about it a lot, mentoring was a crucial part of his recovery. And damn satisfying.

“Morning, Janice,” Adam said to spandex lady who was doing stretches on the street corner.

“Hiii, Adam,” she replied, batting her eyelashes as she stuck out her hip.

He chuckled to himself. I should probably tell her I don’t play for her team, but it’s more fun not to.

The morning passed quickly, and before he knew it he was hugging Kris goodbye and heading out to work. A little pocket of nervousness formed in his stomach when he walked into the shop. So far, however, Alex was keeping to his word about not prying, plus Adam felt safer with the bulletproof glass installed even though it was probably unnecessary. Guess it’s good practice for when I have to be a diva later on in my career. He tried not to laugh out loud, certain it would distract Alex and that was the last thing he wanted to do. Nothing should interrupt the man from creating such art. It was kind of odd, however, knowing that Alex might be sneaking glances at him from time to time for inspiration. Better get used to the attention if you want to be famous someday. Ugh, no, don’t start thinking about the media event with Ryan.

Adam used his entire shift that day to work on a difficult sewing project Alex had given him and he still wasn’t done when it was time to leave at three. “See ya tomorrow, Tommy.” Is that another bruise?

“Bye,” his co-worker replied, smoothing his hair down over the discolored mark on his forehead.

***

Since the coffee shop where he and Brian met was so close to Sew Your Soul, Adam usually walked there. “Kris is not the answer,” he said under his breath, picking up his pace to make it on time.

Brian was in an odd mood. Apparently his therapist wasn’t “some hack job” after all, but Brian had also been allowed to return to school last week and Adam couldn’t tell how he felt about that. As usual, however, the first thing his cousin wanted to discuss in depth was Kris. “How is he?”

“He’s fine,” said Adam as he always did. “And no, we’re not going to talk about him.” They sat down in a booth and ordered some coffee. “So you’re happy to be back at school?”

Brian shrugged. “At least I get to see Caleb, that’s the new guy.”
“The blond?”

“No, he’s a redhead. Cute as hell, too. You think…think he’d ever wanna go out with me after what happened? I mean everyone in the school knows why I got suspended.” He started playing with the sugar packets in a glum sort of way. “They know I’m a freak.”

“Hey now! Don’t call yourself that!” Adam exclaimed, so forcefully that he surprised himself. He tried to lower his voice because people were staring. “Sorry, I mean…you are not a freak, Brian. You’re just a kid who’s going through stuff. I’m not saying it’s okay to attack people, because that’s really wrong, but you’re not a freak, just struggling.” Gee that sounds familiar, doesn’t it?

“Like you used to before you met Kris?” Brian asked.

“Look, I…oh thank you,” Adam said to the server who was setting down their drinks. He waited until she was gone and then continued. “I still struggle, and Kris did not fix me. Kris is not the answer.”

“But you’re better now, right? Whatever happened…it’s better now because of him.”

“No, it’s better because of me, because I did the hard work.”

Brian threw him a calculating look. “Could you have done it without him?”

Little fucker, he knows the answer to that. “No, but not because Kris is magic. What makes the difference is having someone to support and love you no matter what.”

“And that’s what I need,” Brain said enthusiastically, almost knocking over his mug with his elbow.

“I thought you wanted control.”

“I do, I need that, too, and I could have both with Kris just like you do.”

Adam barked out a laugh, amazed that his cousin could be so thickheaded. “I have no control over Kris. He does what he wants. He’s a grown man. And what, you want to borrow him or something? Brian, you have the support and love of your parents and others who want to help you. That’s gonna have to be enough until you find a man, or woman, of your own. Again, Kris is not the answer. He’s not the magic pill.”

Brian dumped five packets of sugar in his cup before he spoke again and when he did, he looked just like a little boy. “I need a magic pill. I need one.”

Poor kid, I know exactly how he feels. Adam’s heart went out to him and his next words were said in a kind voice. “Well it doesn’t exist, believe me. I wanted one, too, and you’ll only be disappointed if you continue to look for it.”

“What happened to you anyway? My mom won’t tell me.”

With those words Adam took his heart right back and locked it up tight. “That’s none of your business. It doesn’t concern you.”

“But it does! What if…what if…” Brain looked around, suddenly wide-eyed and fearful as if
expecting his worst enemy to come crashing through the door. “What if something happened to me, too,” he whispered, so quietly that Adam barely heard him.

*Shit. Shit shit shit. I knew it.* “Then you need to tell your parents and your therapist about it so they can help you.”

“They won’t believe me,” he said, sounding convinced of this.

“That’s ridiculous, of course they would.”

Brian shook his head vehemently. “No no no, they wouldn’t, but you might. Um, my teacher--”

“No!” Adam almost jumped out of his seat. “We can’t talk about this. I’m not your therapist and we can’t talk about it. I’m sorry, Brian, really.”

“I thought you were supposed to help me!”

“Yes, but not with this. I can’t, it’ll just turn out really bad.” Trying to keep a handle on himself, he took a deep breath and leaned across the table a bit. “Please tell your therapist at least. Do yourself that favor. If you want to get better, then you have to trust people.”

“Trusting people gets you hurt!”

*Goddamnit, he sounds just like me.* “It can, but it doesn’t always. Most of the time good things happen when you trust people. Please…you’ve got to believe me. It’s in your best interest to tell someone about this, someone besides me. I just…I can’t carry that, Brian, I’m so sorry. Please tell your parents or your counselor.” Adam’s eyes were imploring.

“I don’t know. Maybe.” He bit the side of his lip and looked at Adam warily. “Can I just come and say hi to him?”

*Jesus, he’s got a one track mind!* “You know what, I’m not Kris’ keeper. He can take care of himself and make decisions for himself, but I’ll tell you one thing right now. He’s not gonna be happy to see you and if you do it, this mentoring thing is over. I’m not going to sit by while you stalk my boyfriend and then meet with you just so you can whine about him.”

“But that’s not fair! I like meeting with you! It…it helps.”

As much as Adam wanted to acknowledge how awesome that was, he knew he needed to stand firm on the matter of Kris. “Then make your choice. What’s more important? Obsessing over someone you can’t have or doing something that will actually benefit you?”

Brian kicked at the table leg, grumbling under his breath. “Fine, I’ll stay away from him.”

Relieved, Adam softened his features and smiled. “Good. You won’t regret it.”

“Says you.”

Adam left the coffee shop at four-thirty full of mixed emotions. The fact that something bad had happened to his cousin made him sick to his stomach, but at the same time Adam felt rather proud of himself. After so many years of taking whatever he wanted, he was finally giving something back. And, oddly enough, the more Adam talked to Brian about things he’d learned in the last year, the
more he came to believe and understand them in his own life. Trust, for example, was a concept so
difficult to actually apply in a healthy way that Adam was amazed anyone managed to do it
successfully. Still he knew that it was worth his while to keep trying and hoped that Brian would do
the same.

As he walked back to his car, Adam thought about Kris, Matt, Tommy, Alex and Ryan; five
different men in his life whom he trusted in varying degrees from one hundred percent to the jury-is-
still-deciding, and everything in between. It was like holding a piece of his heart in his fist, giving
someone a peek at it, and then deciding if he should show more or quickly stuff it back inside. Kris,
of course, got to see everything, the beautiful and the flawed. He loves me, all of me. Adam
suppressed a giggle and drove home to make dinner for his partner.

***

Saturday morning at eleven o’clock found Adam bursting into his apartment and excitedly waving
around a stack of paper. “Look at all these notes!” he called out to Kris, who was curled up with a
sketchpad and a box of colored pencils on the couch. “My album is gonna kick ass!”

Kris grinned up at him. “Of course it will. What did you guys come up with?”

“Tons of stuff. We talked about the sound and the number of tracks and what would be good for
radio…and they really liked some of my ideas, not all of them though. I think I might be a little too
out there for one of the producers.”

“And I wasn’t as nervous as I thought I’d be.”

“Eh, he’ll come around. So, did you actually do any recording?”

“No, we’re still sorting through songs at this point. But that’s okay, at least everything is starting,
right?”

Absolutely, and I’m so proud of you, baby. You’re gonna be a rock star!” He held his sketchpad
out to Adam with a teasing smile on his face. “Can I have your autograph?”

Adam was about to play along when he saw what Kris had been drawing and his jaw dropped. “Oh
my god, that’s you in your Halloween costume. Shit, that is sexy.” Adam kind of wanted to lick
the paper. “Your dick looked way bigger than that though, seriously, those pants just….” He couldn’t
stop staring. Can I have that painted on the back of my eyelids somehow?

“I’m up here, babe,” said Kris after a minute.

“What? Oh sorry.” Adam glanced up to see Kris wearing a cute smile. “Sooo, what are your plans for
that drawing when it’s done?”

“Hmm, not sure, I thought maybe I’d have you give it to Brian…I’m kidding, ouch! Oh my god I’m
kidding, stop hitting me, you dork! I’m drawing it for you! Ahhhh! No tickling!” His pencils and pad
slipped to the floor as he squirmed away from Adam’s wriggling fingers.

Adam laughed and pounced on him. Eyes twinkling, he made Kris scream like a little girl, tickling
him mercilessly until he couldn’t stand not kissing those pretty lips a second longer. “You’re so hot
when you squeak,” he giggled.

“Ha! You’d think it was hot if I scratched my nose,” Kris chuckled.

“Can’t argue with that,” Adam murmured as he lowered his head.

After a sufficiently long makeout session, the couple got ready to go to the beach, where Adam hoped to start forming some new memories with Kris and Fifi at his side. It took them almost an hour to prepare for the outing and gather everything up: sunscreen, a cooler full of ice packs and lunch, flip flops, a blanket, Fifi’s sling and accessories, bottles of water, and last but certainly not least, the sand toys Adam had received from Kris for his birthday. A bright orange bucket, a blue toy shovel, a small dump truck, a rake and a red cape; his heart ached a bit, in a good way, as he put them into the beach bag. *This is gonna work.* He had it all planned out.

“Ready?” asked Kris when the car was loaded.

Adam nodded. Fifi, covered from nose to tail in sunscreen and wearing a yellow tank top with a pink heart on it, looked absolutely precious. Adam clipped on her leash, grabbed Kris’ hand and walked out the door with hope on his horizon.

They went to the Santa Monica Pier since Adam had done so well on his own there before going to the secluded beach last week. Seeing as it was a hot and gorgeous Saturday afternoon, the place was packed. Kris drove around for what felt like hours until he found a parking spot right next to the shore. He cut the engine and glanced at Adam, smiling softly.

Adam’s confidence was already coming to life as he realized that he couldn’t tell the difference between nervousness and excitement. *I’m sitting by the beach and I’m okay.* The ocean salt was heavy in the air; Adam could taste it and it only made his stomach the tiniest bit queasy. He knew the monsters were there, hiding somewhere in the back of his brain, but for now they were quiet. “Let’s do it.”

They left everything in the car except Fifi and two ice packs wrapped in a towel. Kris took Adam by the hand and they began to stroll down the sidewalk, their little pup trotting beside Kris. “So tell me about your first memory of the beach.”

“Well I know that mom brought me here when I was an infant,” Adam began, “but my earliest memory is when I felt the ocean water for the first time. I couldn’t have been older than two.” As he spoke, he kept his senses focused on the cool of the ice packs, the clicking of Fifi’s nails on the cement and the sounds of the waves, which no longer frightened him. “We were following a seagull and I remember the shock of the cold water on my toes. My mom said my face was like that kid’s from Home Alone,” he chuckled. “And then I remember cuddling in a blanket with her…so warm…and that’s it.” He grinned at Kris.

“I can see it now. I bet you were the cutest baby ever, all that ginger hair. Tell me another one.”

For nearly thirty minutes Adam talked, recalling as many scenes as he could while he and Kris navigated the edges of the beach. He looked up in the middle of a story and was surprised to find himself standing at the car again. “Wow!”

“Wow is right,” said Kris. “You are totally kicking ass! Ready for the sand?”

“Yeah!” Adam tossed Fifi’s ‘doggie bag’ into a nearby trashcan and asked Kris to unlock the car.
“You ready to be carried, girl?” he cooed as he changed out of his boots. Fifi wagged her tail and hopped up and down until Adam got her situated into her sling. “Okay…flip flops, I’m wearing a dog around my chest and I’ve still got the ice. What am I missing?”

“This.” Kris stepped up to Adam and kissed him full on the mouth, then slipped his tongue in between Adam’s lips, parting them tenderly. Adam sighed, his brain wrapping around the pleasurable sensations as he kissed back. Definitely a good new memory. Their tongues licked each other for quite sometime. Fifi, who was squished in between them, had to yip to get their attention. Adam and Kris apologized to her with scratching behind the ears, then set off towards the water.

Adam walked carefully, almost high stepping because it’d been ten years since he’d felt sand on his feet. Stop avoiding it. Just walk normally. He watched the graceful way Kris was moving and tried to copy him. The tiny grains hit his toes first, then the tops of his feet. It’s fine…fine. But his heart was speeding up. Adam squeezed the ice pack, concentrating on the cold.

“You all right?” asked Kris.

“Uh huh, just…come here.” He swung Fifi’s sling to the side of his body, reached out and pulled Kris to his chest. “Tell me how much you love me.”

Kris put his arms around Adam. “That’s easy,” he said in a quiet voice, “I think my heart was made just to love you. It’s like God was making hearts one day and stamped your name all over mine. I just didn’t know it ‘til I met you.”

Adam sighed and relaxed a little. He squished the sand around in his flip-flops. “Say more.”

“I can’t imagine my life without you. I love you so much that it hurts sometimes when we’re apart.”

“Me too, angel,” Adam whispered. I want to marry him so bad. He started forgetting about the sand and the beach as big, glittery wedding scenes played in his head. I wonder if we could get peacocks? They stood in silence for a little longer, and then Adam was ready to move again. The ocean was a sea of peacock feathers all rustling in the wind as Adam and Kris walked down the isle.

By two o’clock they were both hungry and Adam was feeling comfortable enough to take the next step. Fifi poked her head out of the sling, sniffing when the couple sat down on the blanket and spread out their lunch. “Yes, you get some, too.” Adam blew up her inflatable doggie bowls and put a little food in one and some water in the other. She jumped out of her carrier and went after the morsels as Adam secured her leash. There were still tons of people everywhere he looked, but this was a good thing because it provided plenty of distraction from his own lurking thoughts.

Kris picked up a sandwich, then lay down with his head on Adam’s lap and began to eat. “Bean sprouts,” he snorted, “I should’ve made my own lunch.”

“Oh stop, they’re good for you,” Adam said, running his fingers through Kris’ soft hair and smiling at him fondly. Just as he took a bite of his own sandwich, he heard a chorus of voices nearby.

“Look at their dog! She’s wearing clothes!” “What a couple of fags! Come on, let’s go have some fun.” Adam and Kris looked up and saw a group of young men headed their way. At once Kris jumped to his feet and ran to intercept them, but it was too late for Adam. His eyes grew wide and the sun went away as his closest friends descended upon on him, bent on ruining him forever. Panicking, Adam shoved his hands into the cooler, wishing he could dive into it and close the top.
“I said get the fuck out of here or I’m calling the police! Go!” That was Kris, yelling right in the face of the largest man.

Adam’s tactics weren’t working. A loud buzzing sound filled his ears and blackness covered his eyes. He was falling…falling…

“Adam! Look at me! Come on, baby, I’m right here.”

Someone’s saying something…fuzzy. Freezing cold hands touched his cheeks, arresting the flashback that had been on the brink of crashing and kicking it from Adam’s vision. Loving brown eyes were there instead. “Kris?”

“Yes, you’re here with me, no one is gonna hurt you. You’re safe. Look at me now, that’s right, just breathe.”

“Men…”

“They’re gone, I sent them away.”

Can’t fight your own battles, Lambert? What? No, I don’t want you here. Get out! At least I got this far. Leave me alone! “More ice.” With one hand Kris plucked an ice pack from the cooler and pressed it to Adam’s chest. Slowly, the cold seeping into his body and Kris’ steady presence restored the calm.

“Better?”

“Yeah.” I’m not cured, but I’m better. I’m better. Adam repeated this several times in an attempt to ward off shame and hang on to his confidence at the same time. It was hard. He ended up snuggling with Kris and Fifi on the blanket. The sun made everything shimmer, diamond-like, and if Adam squinted his eyes just right, he could imagine that he and Kris were surrounded by stars, floating out in space on their own private piece of heaven. Lost in this imagery, Adam eventually felt as cozy and safe as he had when his momma had cuddled him so long ago.

Maybe I’ll get to play with the sand toys next time.

Chapter 65

14 Below was a Santa Monica staple, a club lively enough to draw crowds every night but casual to the point where one could see familiar faces on a regular basis. The music performed by cover bands, metal rockers and local indie folk groups kept the atmosphere pleasantly local in a town where people went broke trying to pay for the entrance fee to most other clubs.

Saturday evening found Adam, Kris, Megan, Alisan and Matt all there, standing in front of the stage to support Tommy as he plucked out his sick bass beats. He looked particularly stunning with the dark eye make-up, red lipstick and blond hair falling into his eyes.

Kris could admit that Tommy was pretty, although not nearly as gorgeous as Adam. Happily tucked under Adam’s arm, Kris glanced up at him for a moment and grinned, his heart thumping with
devotion. I’m gonna propose. I don’t care if we have to get married in Canada, I want to see engagement rings on our fingers...soon. He suddenly giggled out loud.

The sound was mostly lost in the music, but Adam heard it and looked down. “What’s so funny?” he asked into Kris’ ear.

“Nothing, just love you is all.”

Adam smiled at him, pressed a kiss to the top of his head and murmured, “love you, too, angel.”

They returned their attention to the stage just as Tommy’s band was churning out the final notes to a hard rock number. Hoots and cheers broke out and Kris whistled loudly. “He’s damn good!”

“I know!” Adam called above the din.

Although the show was to turning out to be an excellent one, Kris couldn’t help but notice the strained interaction between Tommy and the lead singer as well as the bruises Adam had pointed out. Wonder what’s up...I hope he’s okay. Kris decided to check in with Matt about it later. Throughout the rest of the set, Tommy’s energetic head banging and nimble fingers might have made Kris forget that anything was off, but afterward when the band was leaving the stage he heard one of the performers bark, “You ass! You totally fucked up that last riff!”

Kris frowned and turned to his friends in concern. Their faces reflected his worry. “Guys, is everything all right with Tommy?”

“I dunno,” said Matt, “you know how he’s usually so talkative and stuff, but now he just kinda keeps to himself at home.”

“Things with Russell, that’s the singer, well they haven’t been so hot,” Megan added.

“I don’t like the looks of those bruises,” Adam said to her, but she just glanced at the floor and started chewing on her lip.

Kris ducked his face under hers until she looked up. “Meg, is someone hurting him?”

Shrugging, she pushed her long hair from her face and said, “It’s not really any of our business. Tommy says he can take care of himself.”

A crash and a loud yelp made them all whip their heads around towards the backstage area. Without hesitating the group of friends made a mad dash for the noises, knocking away any hands that tried to stop them. They skidded to a halt upon reaching the tiny green room, jaws falling to the floor at the awful scene that met their eyes.

Russell had Tommy pinned to the wall by his throat, large sausage-like fingers crushing bruises into that pretty neck and drawing choking gasps from it.

“NO!” Like a bull Adam rushed him, not even slowing down before throwing a brutal punch to Russell’s right temple. Russell’s eyes popped for a moment, then his fingers uncurled and he dropped to the ground. “YOU DON’T HURT HIM!” Adam screamed at the unconscious man, somehow still managing to catch Tommy in his arms and not even flinching at the contact. “NEVER AGAIN!” Flecks of spit flew from his mouth, his face a mask of rage so violent it was frightening. He lifted his foot over Russell’s chest.
“Adam!” Kris called out.

Adam froze.

Kris tentatively approached him with hands raised in a gesture one might use to calm an untamed stallion. “He’s out now and Tommy’s okay. Look at me.” His eyes are so wild! Kris didn’t blink, just held on to Adam’s gaze until that fiery blaze simmered down. “That’s right, it’s okay,” he said soothingly, nodding as Adam lowered his foot back to the floor.

“I’m fine,” Tommy coughed, rubbing his neck and extricating himself from Adam as Megan hurried to his side. He blushed deeply when she started fussing over him. “I’m fine, Meg.”

“You’re not fine!” Adam roared, still staring intently at Kris.

“Thank you for helping,” said Tommy quietly, “but honestly I’ve been through worse with him,” he finished, brushing at one of the bruises on his face.

There was a chorus of gasps from everyone except Megan who just looked sad. “You should have him arrested!” Alisan cried. Kris and Matt nodded vigorously, anger plain on their features. “You can’t let him get away with that,” Kris growled, almost wanting to take Adam’s example and punch or kick Russell.

“It’ll only piss him off more if I file a report, and then I’d be in serious trouble. Plus I need this job. I looked for ages for a good band…I can’t lose it.”

Adam, who’d been silently clenching his fists until they shook, spat on Russell’s face. “Is it the money? I can help, you don’t have to take this shit.”

Although Kris loved Adam’s fierce sense of justice and generosity, he knew there must be pain underneath the wrath. At least this didn’t trigger him into a flashback. Wrapping an arm around him, Kris felt the tense muscles working hard.

“I don’t need money,” said Tommy, his mouth turning down, “I need to play music.”

“I’ll find you another gig then!”

“Look,” Tommy sighed as he pushed Megan away, “this is my business, alright? I don’t pry into yours, so stay out of mine.” And with that he left to find his other band mates.

***

“It’s not right!”

“I know, baby, but there’s nothing we can do.”

Adam banged his fists on the steering wheel again. “There has to be! I have to do something!”

“Like what?”
“Find him a new gig…use connections with my dad’s company. Shit, I’d hire him if I had a band. I can’t sit by and do nothing.”

“He asked you not to pry,” said Kris. “Sometimes you can’t make things better, especially if people don’t want the help.”

Adam gritted his teeth, glanced around the road and found a place to pull over. Once the car was parked he twisted in his seat and faced Kris with a desperate looking expression. “I have to make it better, don’t you see? If I can keep him from being abused, it’s like…well like Brian, for example.”

“Wait what? What does Brian have to do with this? He’s the one who attacked someone, remember?”

“But that’s because something bad happened to him and I helped by getting him to go to therapy. Maybe no one else will get hurt now, and…” Adam took a deep breath before continuing. “Maybe his pain inside will get healed, hopefully faster than mine though.”

Along with the stab to his heart at the thought of the deep wounds that continued to plague his lover, Kris suddenly saw where Adam was going with this. “You want to save people from suffering, like a real life superhero?”

“Yes! Well minus the cape, but yeah. And I want to get more involved somehow. I can sign up to be a mentor for Big Brothers Big Sisters or volunteer at a youth outreach or…”

“Adam, you’ve already got a hell of a lot going on,” said Kris, both enamored by the image of his boyfriend in a superman suit and concerned that yet again, he was in danger of pushing himself too far. “You work at Sew Your Soul every day plus you have to be Seacrest’s fashion adviser,” Kris began, ticking off two fingers on his hand, “and you still perform at the club. You’ve got therapy every week, psychiatry once a month and you mentor Brian and then let’s see what else, how about you’re making a record?”

Adam winced at the number of fingers Kris waggled in the air. “I know it’s a lot, but I need to make more of a difference. It’s power, the good kind, like when cancer survivors start raising awareness.”

Kris listened intently, wanting to understand.

“I spent a decade of my life doing nothing but hurting myself,” Adam went on. “I can’t help it if I’m a little eager to reverse that now.” He suddenly gasped, clapping his hands to his mouth. “Oh my god, I know how to help Tommy!” Wide eyes peeked over his fingers and a little giggle bubbled out, which was so damn cute that Kris had to smile.

“How?”

“I can ask the club to hire him to accompany me!” Adam squeaked.

Kris gaped at him. “But, but…”

“But what? It’s perfect! He’s so talented and then he could get away from that fucking asshole and really strut his stuff.” Beaming, Adam started the car again. “Oh my god I can’t wait to ask the manager tonight. Shit, I’m gonna be late if I don’t hurry!”
Brains really should go easier on people sometimes. Poor Kris felt like he was going to self-combust with all the conflicting thoughts and feelings having a field day up there, and the first thing that burst from his mouth was, “You could’ve asked me to play with you any time.”

“Seriously?” Adam laughed. “You’re a gifted song-writer and singer, a front man, you shouldn’t be backing up anyone, angel. Wait…” He shot a curious glance at Kris. “You’re not jealous of Tommy, are you?”

“Of course not,” Kris said in his most convincing voice, because he really wasn’t jealous, really.

“Oh my god you are!”

Busted. “No, well yes, I mean I just…I’ve always thought it’d be cool to create music with you.”

Adam pulled over again despite the fact that he had to be on stage in less than twenty minutes. “You ridiculous man,” he said as he practically jumped into the passenger seat onto Kris, “you are the love of my life, my soul mate, my muse and I would be honored to write songs with you, as an equal.” Face ablaze like the sun shining its warmth at the earth, Adam followed his declaration with a kiss so sweet that it erased everything in Kris’ being but Adam, love, Adam, love, Adam, love.

“We could write a make out song,” said Kris slyly when their lips finally parted.

“Now you’re talking.”

*

Adam didn’t speed to the club to be on time; both he and Kris were very cautious when driving ever since the horrible car crash. Kris still experienced little jolts of adrenaline whenever he heard the sound of tires screeching. Thankfully his ears were saved from that torture and then got treated to Adam’s gorgeous singing voice.

He sat at his usual table in front with his chin in his hands, soaking up the music and the way Adam’s body could move. Slim, swaying hips made Kris think of other things, too, beautiful and sensual things. A little chill crawled up his spine when Adam thrust in his direction and winked at him from the stage. Tease.

“And now,” said Adam into the microphone, “I’d like to sing a very special song to a very special person.” His mischievous eyes zeroed in on Kris.

Oh damn. I’m in so much trouble. The pianist plunked out a few familiar notes and Kris immediately started to laugh.

Adam tossed his head into the air, again reminding Kris of a barely tamed beast. “Ain’t no sunshine when he’s gone,” he sang as he prowled down the stage steps. “It’s not warm when he’s away…” Leather and glitter and breathy voice made their way to Kris’ table, turning what used to be a fairly innocent song into seduction. The words were more like moans, reminiscent of the sounds Adam made during sex.

Kris tried to keep up his amused smile to match the crowd’s whistles, but by the time Adam stood a mere foot away, it was all he could do not to pounce on the man. *How the hell does he do that?* No
doubt he had some kind of magic power over Kris’ libido. One wave of the wand, so to speak, and Kris felt as if life’s only purpose in that moment was to be fucked by Adam Lambert. His pulse quickened.

The whole situation got much, much worse when Adam straddled Kris’ lap, sat down and started rolling his hips in time to the refrain, “and I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, hey, I ought to leave the young thing alone…”

Oh….oh my god… As their dicks rubbed together, Kris heard himself groan out loud amidst the catcalls from the audience. He blushed and attempted to get it together. Adam smirked at him, licking his freckled lips in between notes. Half glaring and half lust blown, Kris’ eyes said in no uncertain terms that he would do his best to make that devil pay for this later. Another wink replied, ‘I dare you to try.’

After a final thrust that almost made Kris come in his pants Adam got up and backed away, trailing one finger under Kris’ chin as he went.

Oh I’ll get you, yes I will. Kris spent the rest of Adam’s set with his legs crossed and hands folded together over his hard on.

After the last song, Adam bowed and thanked the audience. “I’d also like to announce that I’ve recently been signed to a record label and plan to release an album in the spring of 2011.” A deafening roar of approval filled the room and Kris started beaming with pride in his man. He clapped and shouted right along with everyone else until the stage lights went down.

While waiting for Adam to speak to his manager about Tommy, it suddenly occurred to Kris that he was the only one here tonight. No Tommy, Matt, Alisan or Megan to help him with Adam’s fans, and after the album announcement Kris had a feeling they’d be even more enthusiastic than usual. Thankfully Adam’s ability to handle them was improving, but Kris still wished that Matt hadn’t decided to go home. Selfish. You know he wanted to be there for Tommy.

Nearly a half an hour passed before Adam appeared wearing a wide grin on his face. He took two steps towards Kris and was immediately mobbed by fans wanting to know more about his album. Kris darted in and started pushing people out of the way. Finally he reached Adam, who looked paler than usual trying to create a personal bubble around himself while still being polite. It wasn’t working.

Kris grabbed his hand and pulled him through the people until they reached the safety of their usual booth, where Adam at least had a physical barrier to rely on. “You wanna go home?” Kris asked once they were seated.

“No,” said Adam, still looking a bit shaky, “I need to get comfortable with this and I can’t always have a posse of friends around me, so it’s good we’re alone tonight.”

“Really? Because you don’t always have to stay after your set. People can’t expect you to all the time.”

Adam took a deep breath and smiled. “It’s fine.” He turned to a few fans hovering nearby, thanked them and scrawled his signature. “See,” he told Kris when they were gone, “I can do this.”

So brave. Kris was about to say it out loud, but a steady stream of people kept approaching, taking up all of Adam’s attention until it became thoroughly irritating. The perfect way to solve the problem
came to Kris when he remembered that he owed his lover some payback. “Excuse us,” he said to yet another fawning pretty boy, then climbed onto Adam’s lap and proceeded to suck on his tongue. As Adam responded with a passionate kiss, Kris heard a groan of jealousy from fanboy. *Ha!*

Very quickly everyone gave the couple some privacy, because it didn’t look like they’d be surfacing any time soon. Kris, in fact, was content to sit in that booth and make out for the rest of his natural life. He felt pretty damn proud of the way Adam kept whining for more, too. All those long, firm muscles seemed to melt beneath him, like petals opening up to thirsty hummingbird. Kris dipped inside repeatedly, getting drunk on the flavor and feeling of dominance that had eluded him for so long.

“Jesus, look what happens when we leave them alone.”

“No shit, it’s like they’re trying to eat each other’s faces.”

The voices were easily recognizable and hearing them made Kris grin into Adam’s mouth. “Mmph, siddown, m’almost done,” he said to Matt and Tommy, continuing to ravage his man with searing kisses and licks that rendered Adam utterly helpless.


One last delicious taste of that bottom lip and Kris finally relented, letting his lover breathe.

“Angel, oh my god baby, you…fuck…” Adam wheezed when Kris slipped off his lap. “Hey Matt, Tommy…shit, gimme a second.” After adjusting his pants and downing a glass of water, he licked his swollen lips several times. “Damn. Er, what are you guys doing here? I mean hi, I mean…” Adam shook his head like a befuddled animal, drawing laughs from his friends. “Oh shut up, you two.”

Another round of snickering made Adam flush uncharacteristically, but he still smiled and pulled Kris into his arms. “So, to what do we owe the pleasure-- oh my god, Tommy!” Adam sat up straight, his eyes wide and excited. “I need to talk to you!”

“Actually I came here to do that,” said Tommy seriously. “I’m really sorry that I snapped at you earlier, I know you were just trying to help.”

“It’s totally okay! Listen, I want to help more and I think I found you a new job!”

Tommy looked skeptical. “Uh, really?”

“Mhmm. I want you to accompany me. I talked to my manager already and he’s interested, he wants to meet you! Hey, since you’re here--”

“Whoa whoa whoa, slow down, just…wait.” Tommy’s sculpted brows furrowed, making Kris’ heart sink a little because he knew how badly Adam wanted this, how happy it would make him. *Please say yes, Tommy, please. You don’t know what he’s been through, what it’s taken him to be your friend. Say yes.* But the frown on the man’s petite face didn’t bode well. “You want me to quit my band and come play for you?”
“Yeah! Don’t you think it’s a great idea?”

“No, not really.”

“You…you don’t? But why?”

Kris couldn’t stand the disappointment he saw in Adam’s eyes, and he fought the urge to butt in and make Tommy change his mind.

“Adam, you’re a great friend and a fantastic singer, but you only perform twice a week and I need more than that.”

“You said it wasn’t about the money though,” Kris cut in, unable to stop himself.

“It’s not--”

“And twice a week is more than you play now,” said Adam, leaning across the table. “At least you’d have a steady gig.”

Tommy looked around at everyone, Kris and Adam the salesmen and Matt, who put his hands up as if to say, ‘I’m not getting involved!’ Tommy bit his lip and tried again. “But I play heavy metal music. Your style is so different.”

“You’re making excuses now,” growled Adam.

“No I’m not, I just don’t want to be rescued!” Tommy blurted out. “I’m not a fucking damsel in distress, you know!”

A ringing silence filled the space around their table. The two men became statues, staring intently at one another.

“Uh, Kris,” said Matt, standing up from the booth, “let’s go get some drinks for everyone.” Caught between wanting to support Adam and feeling like an intruder, Kris just sat there for a minute, undecided, until Matt literally pulled him away. Adam didn’t even seem to notice.

“Let them work it out,” Matt continued as he dragged Kris to the bar.

Kris scowled. He didn’t even ask me to stay. That’s what you’ve always wanted though, isn’t it? For him to be less needy, more confident in himself?

“I don’t always have to be the one making the most effort. ‘Okay.’”

When the friends reached the bar they sat down on a pair of stools and ordered some beer. “Just like old times,” said Matt after chugging a few mouthfuls. He turned to Kris and smiled. “How the hell are you? Seems like ages since we hung out just you and me.”

“It’s been a long time.” A pang of guilt tugged at Kris’ heart, but after a moment’s thought he remembered that he wasn’t solely responsible for their friendship. “I don’t always have to be the one making the most effort. ‘Yeah, I’m good. You?’”

“Can’t complain. Things are great with Ali and I’ve got my first audition coming up.”

“Really? That’s awesome, what’s it for?”
“An extra in a low budget romantic comedy. Not a big deal, but—”

“It’s wonderful! All actors have to start somewhere, right?” Kris grinned widely at his friend. “And if you get it then that’s something on your resume for the next audition.”

“That’s what my acting prof said. Kinda gonna miss that guy.”

“I feel ya. The director of my music program has been amazing, but I plan to keep in touch with him after graduation.” He took another sip of beer. “Can you believe the dress rehearsal schedule? I mean, why do we need a whole day to learn how to accept a diploma?”

“So they can figure out how to pronounce my last name right,” Matt snorted. “Hey! You should bring your ukulele to graduation and play something on my turn. No seriously,” he said when Kris started laughing, “it’s even small enough to hide under your graduation gown!”

“No way,” Kris chuckled, shaking his head, “this isn’t high school and I gotta be on my best behavior. Adam’s parents will be there and my mom would probably disown me if I did that.” In spite of his words to Matt, Kris felt a bit of rebellion peek out and considering that he was almost always on his best behavior in public, the idea of doing something unexpected was very appealing. A few ideas excited his imagination, but he kept them to himself.

Matt called him a party pooper but patted him on the shoulder good-naturedly. “So the families are gonna meet, huh? You nervous?”

“A little. Adam and his dad had a fight about my parents. I guess Eber wasn’t sure if they were really supportive of our relationship.”

“You’re joking, right? Your parents are some of the most loving people I’ve ever met.”

“They really are, but Adam’s dad is a bit protective of him and all he heard about my folks was me complaining that I had to pretend to be straight at family get-togethers. Anyway it looks like they worked things out and I’m sure that once everyone meets it’ll all be good.”

“Sounds like you’re trying to convince yourself of that.”

Kris did a quick self-check in and discovered that Matt was right. He shrugged, downing the rest of his drink in a few gulps. “I just want them to get along because soon they’ll all be part of the same family.” This thought made his face go all goofy and ridiculous until he realized that he’d said it out loud. *Crap.*

“Wait, you…you’re getting married? Oh my god, when? Why didn’t you tell me? Holy shit! I’m gonna be your best man, right? Right?”

If Kris hadn’t had his foot in his mouth he would’ve laughed at Matt’s resemblance to a owl. As it was he just tried to shush the dork so everyone would stop staring at them. “Look, I haven’t even proposed yet so calm down already. Nothing is planned and we’ll have to do it out of state for it to be legal, but yeah…yeah I’m going to ask him.” He went beet red, looked at Matt and then yelped in surprise when he was swept up into a bone-crushing hug.

“So happy for you, so damn happy.”
Kris was pretty sure he heard a sniffle in there somewhere and his eyes stung with tears in reciprocation. “Thanks, and of course you’ll be my best man. Couldn’t have survived California without you.”

They embraced as long as manliness would allow and then clapped each other on the back.

“Think they’ve got things sorted out yet?” asked Kris after clearing his throat a few times.

“Let’s go see.”

But when they returned to the booth, Adam and Tommy weren’t there. They sat down, agreeing that Adam had most likely convinced Tommy to go meet the club manager. “He can be very persuasive,” said Kris.

Matt smirked. “I don’t doubt that.”

They only had about five minutes to wait before Adam and Tommy appeared and joined them.

_Okay Adam doesn’t seem pissed, that’s a good sign._ Kris curled an arm around him as he sat down. “So what’s the scoop?”

“I said I’d think about it,” said Tommy, looking pensive. “And I really will, Adam. I’m going to seriously consider this, okay?”

Adam nodded. “I hope you’ll accept the offer, and not just because Russell is such a dick. You’re extremely talented and I’d love to work with you.”

They shared a genuine smile and Kris’ was suddenly awed at how far Adam had come socially. He didn’t even feel jealous of Tommy, not at the moment anyway. _I’m Adam’s soul mate and we’re gonna be together forever. So there._

When he and Adam got home that night, Kris was treated to an truly delicious back rub for being “such a patient and loving man.”

“And I promise to reward you even more before the weekend is up,” Adam purred with a kiss to the back of Kris’ neck. “Don’t think I’ve forgotten.”

***

The next morning Kris was roused from his sleep by the sharp command of “Kristopher! Get in here, now!” He bolted up, adrenaline and panic already pumping though his veins. Naked, he dashed into the studio to see what was the matter with Adam.

“What is it? Are you oka-- oh my god.” _Holy fuck me!_

Dressed in a crisp black suit and holding a music baton, Adam glowered sternly at Kris. “You’re late for your piano lesson. Sit down!”

“But--”
Adam raised the thin wooden stick and brought it down hard against Kris’ thigh.

“Fuck!” His dick went rigid.

“No excuses, Allen, no cussing, and you will address me as ‘sir’ at all times, understood?”

This is because I told him I used to have a crush on my music director in high school. Oh my fucking god. Trembling, Kris sat his bare ass on the piano bench and tried to control that crazy thing called breathing. “Yes, sir. I’m sorry, sir.”

“Don’t be late again,” said Adam, smoothing a hand over his slicked back hair. “Let’s start with some scales.” He rapped the baton into his palm a few times and Kris immediately knew that any mistakes would cost him.

Maybe I’ll mess up on purpose.

“Begin.”

Kris started playing his scales, making sure for now not to miss a single note. He needed time to get into the role and found comfort in this simple exercise.

“Very good,” said Adam, eyes glittering mischievously. “Now pick up the tempo.”

His hands flew up and down the keys a little faster and all the while Kris tried to anticipate what would come next. He shivered hard, which made his fingers slip.

“Tsk tsk.” Adam walked around the piano, leaned over and whispered into Kris’ ear. “Naughty rabbits get punished.” That gentle voice was a ruthless contrast to the baton snapping across Kris’ ass.

Gasping, Kris bit his tongue in an effort not to swear. He felt a few drops of precum slither down his cock.

“What do you say?” Adam prompted, brushing the wand down Kris’ back.

“Th-thank you, sir.”

“Good boy.” He straightened up but did not move otherwise. “You will now play ‘Gaspard de la nuit’ by Revel.”

“What! No way,” Kris protested, “that’s like, the most difficult piece known to man. I don’t have a clue how to--”

Thwack!

“Shit!”

“I said no cussing,” Adam growled before rapping Kris’ knuckles with the baton again. “Play it.”

Kris thought it was utterly ridiculous to even try when even the most advanced pianists struggled with the number. Isn’t that the point though? Oh god, he’s gonna make me come right here on this
“Alright.”

Adam lifted Kris’ chin with the baton until their eyes met. “Alright…what?”

“Alright…sir.” There was a whimper begging to escape Kris’ throat, a noise of submissive ecstasy so full of longing that he had to keep it inside. He was certain that if Adam heard it the game would be over and he’d be fucked inside out in under a minute. Just a little more fun first. Kris put his fingers to the keys and played the first few notes, which were thankfully slow, not to mention the only ones he knew of the nine-minute piece. But he was seriously fucked after that and ended up plunking out some random melody not even remotely resembling Revel’s masterpiece.

“Pathetic attempt!” Adam shouted as he sliced the baton through the air.

Kris threw his head back, moaning, and kept right on playing god only knows what. Every stinging lash to his skin was an aphrodisiac making his breath stutter, but when Adam started tapping the wand against his straining dick, he lost control. His hands fell from the piano, completely devoid of volition to do anything but flail helplessly.

“Did I say you could stop?” Adam continued that goddamn tap…tap…tap.

“No, no sir,” panted Kris, grinding his teeth in pleasured agony. He made every attempt to hold his fingers to the keys while Adam tortured him, rubbing the baton up and down his length and murmuring things like, “that’s my good rabbit.” Discordant sounds rang out along with the incoherency spilling from Kris’ lips.

Two full minutes passed and by the time Adam commanded him to stop, Kris was desperate to come. “Please, sir,” he whined, trying not to touch himself. Hot breath bathed his neck and it smelled like arousal. He wants me.

Kris stood up without permission and reached back to spread his cheeks open. “Please.” A shuddering gasp said he’d done the right thing.

Adam snarled, shoving Kris forward and up onto the piano so that his knees were resting on the keys with hands splaying across the shiny surface. Kris expected cock. Kris wanted cock. But what he got was a series of whips to his ass, back and the bottoms of his feet that stole his breath clean away, as if it ever had a chance in hell of making it out alive. His knees played notes of pain that seemed to go on forever.

Then it all stopped as suddenly as it’d started. He was dying, fucking dying with a need that became nearly unbearable with a hot, wet tongue slithering in between his cheeks. “Adam, oh god…”

“Sir,” said Adam, a hint of dangerousness heating his voice as he continued to lap at Kris’ hole.

“Yesssss…yessir.” Sweaty palms slipped but the teacher didn’t stop, just kept pushing and licking until Kris was fully laid out with his toes brushing the keys and breath painting swirly fog designs on the wood.

Adam made little grunts of pleasure as he worked, thrusting his tongue in and out, drawing circles and figure eights around puckered skin while Kris humped the piano.

Kris saw his reflection and was immediately enthralled at the way his mouth looked like Adam’s during an orgasm. He licked it. And then did it again with every intention of continuing, but the glorious sounds of a fly being unzipped and pants pooling at ankles met his ears and he stopped kissing himself. Looking back over his shoulder, he saw hard cock jutting out, twitching and
glistening wet. His brain yelled halle-fuckin-luiah before shorting circuiting altogether. “I’ve been a bad, bad rabbit,” Kris groaned. “I messed up the song, I made mistakes…fuck me…sir…don’t be gentle…please…”

Scrambling legs and arms came out of nowhere and pinned Kris down so fast that he banged his forehead on the piano. He was an instant from shouting when Adam clapped both hands over his mouth and thrust, penetrating deep with no lube and fuck did Kris yell then, right into Adam’s palms.

Adam tore into him, yanked his head back with every snap of hips and cursed loudly over muffled groans. He ground down, swiveled and hit Kris’ prostate dead on.

Kris kicked his feet and his toes struck the keys below. Pulsing, hot dick stroked his insides with deft precision; Adam knew what the fuck he was doing and Kris loved him, worshipped him for it, for that and about a billion other reasons. But right now there was sharp, bright pleasure just everywhere all at once gagging him as Adam was doing with those clever hands of his.

There were no slapping sounds of skin on skin, like Adam couldn’t bear to pull out far enough to make them. Kris had to start licking Adam’s palms because otherwise he was going to fucking explode. The licking didn’t help, it just made him burn even hotter, closer to coming undone and he didn’t want to until he felt warm cum fill his ass.

“Shit, shit!” Adam’s thighs tightened like a vice around Kris’ body, squeezing… squeezing. He pulled hard on Kris’ mouth, bending him up and back and Kris went with it, used his hands to push and see Adam upside down and falling apart at the seams. “Almost…oh fuck!  Fuck!” His face scrunched up, eyes and mouth and cheeks, then it all went open and wide, expanding so lusciously that Kris’ moans became cries.

He caught sight of a blue tie still fastened around Adam’s neck and it flooded his brain with a frenzy of joyous, erotic memories of The Tie. Kris’ hips went crazy, flailing and fucking and begging Adam for release.

Without a word Adam pulled out, flipped Kris over and used some kind of freaky telepathic abilities to read his mind. Smirking, he took off the tie and wrapped it around Kris’ dick several times.

“Oh my god, Adam…Adam…”

The game was clearly over because Adam didn’t correct him this time, focusing all energy instead on the silk handjob that made Kris forget his own name. Up and down the tie stroked him, Adam’s mouth curled up in a wicked grin. “Naughty rabbit.”

“Naughty r-rabbit! Adam!” The pleasure broke over him like a tidal wave, liquid smooth and perfect and crushing. He arched high into the air, shuddering, gasping until he was spent and streaked with cum, then collapsed onto his beloved piano.

Five ticks of the clock on the wall and then Adam leaned down, smiling, and kissed Kris’ quivering lips. “Good morning, angel.”

“That is one helluva…fucking understatement,” Kris panted. “You are the most… wicked, most amazing… brilliant…”

“Do I get the teacher of the year award?”
“Are you kidding?” Kris chuckled. “You get the everything award, the biggest gold cup in the whole
damn universe. It can even have glitter on it and hearts and--”

“Shut up and kiss me some more.”

Kris nuzzled into Adam’s neck. “Yes, sir.”

***

Two hours after the sun rose on the day before graduation, Kris was running around the apartment
like a maniac while Adam calmly made them breakfast.

“My shoes! Where are my brown shoes, I can’t find them!”

“On the shoe rack,” said Adam.

“What shoe rack?”

“The one in the bedroom closet.”

Kris came to a halt and stared at him. “How am I supposed to find my shoes if they’re on a rack!”
Then he took off for the bedroom as Adam replied, “that’s the whole point…so you won’t lose
them.” Snorting and grumbling, Kris barreled into the closet. “I never had a problem finding them
when they were by the door!” he yelled, looking for the dumb rack thingy, which he couldn’t
remember ever seeing before.

“Yeah but I kept tripping over them,” said Adam from the closet doorway.

Still panicking Kris ran right into the plastic rack and toppled it over, spilling shoes everywhere.
“They’re not here!” he whined, frantically digging through the pile.

Adam walked over and gently pulled Kris away, then bent down looped one finger through a dark
brown shoestring that was tied in a bow. “Angel,” he said, handing Kris the shoes, “it’s going to be
okay, I promise.”

“You don’t know that! Fuck, why does she even want to come?”

“Because she’s your grandmother and she wants to see you graduate.”

Kris laughed, a high, thin and mirthless sound that made him appear as hysterical as he felt. “Yeah
right! She just wants the chance to preach at your parents and Nana. Everything was supposed to be
perfect between our families and she’s going to ruin it!”

“Her letter didn’t sound like that though. She said she’d be on her best behavior. I think it’s awesome
that she asked you first before just inviting herself.”

“I should’ve said no, why didn’t I say no!” Because you’re still a goddamn people pleaser and you
couldn’t! Pathetic. His hands started to tremble. He stared at them as if he could make them
magically undo the reply letter he’d typed to his grandma on Monday.
“Hey now, hey…come here,” said Adam, pulling Kris into his arms, shoes and all. “It’s gonna be all right. If Sylvia tries to preach, you can bet Nana will take care of her. Plus, don’t forget that you know how to stand up to her now. And my family will still love you, and your parents, no matter what…okay?”

Kris tried to concentrate on the feel of Adam’s fingers combing through his hair, the reassuring body heat and the familiar scent of his lover. He buried his face in Adam’s neck and breathed deeply. Gradually his frenzied thoughts climbed down from the ledge and back into the land of reason. *Adam loves me and we’re gonna be together forever. Nothing Grandma does will change that.*

“Okay…okay.”

“I made French toast,” said Adam softly, “let’s enjoy breakfast before we go to the airport. We have plenty of time.”

“You’re too good to me,” said Kris with a little grin.

“Nah, if I was then I’d have made you bacon, too.” Adam lifted Kris’ chin and placed a tender kiss to his lips.

It tasted like cinnamon.

***

At ten-thirty Kris, Adam and Leila walked into the airport, Kris with one hand clutching his wild child pendant and the other holding the heart shaped rock in his pocket. The stone was warm, reminding him of his grandfather’s hugs. As they neared the arrivals terminal however, he let go of it and took Adam’s hand instead, wanting to make it clear from the beginning that he wasn’t going to hide his affections just because his grandma might not approve. *This is my life, not hers. I don’t need her approval, I don’t.* Sure about that? Yes I am, thank you very much. Kris nodded to himself and squeezed Adam’s hand. He got a loving smile and a kiss to the cheek in return.

When the trio arrived at baggage claim to meet Kris’ family, it took them less than ten seconds to spot the Allen’s due to Sylvia’s loud voice calling above the crowd, “they better not have damaged that package, Neil! Check the box to make sure none of the edges are crushed.”

Kris craned his neck and saw his father and mother examining an enormous box that a pair of baggage handlers had just wheeled over. He knew at once that there was a rocking chair inside, and his heart swelled thinking about how much the Lamberts would love it. Nice one, dad, he thought as he led Adam and Leila through the masses.

With that sixth sense mothers seem to have about the proximity of their children, Kim suddenly looked in Kris’ direction and squealed, “Kris! Hi sweetheart!” She pushed her way towards him, apologizing for elbowing the strangers around her until finally reaching her son.

Kris fell into her arms and sighed. “Hi, ma.”

“Oh my beautiful baby, how I’ve missed you! How’s your leg? Is it all healed now?”

“Pretty much,” said Kris, watching the rest of his family greet Adam warmly. He saw Grandma
Sylvia’s lips twitch into something almost resembling a smile when Adam shook her hand. Grinning, Kris wriggled out of his mother’s grip when he couldn’t breathe anymore and then embraced his dad and brother. He chuckled at the “oomph!” that came from Adam after being hug attacked by Kim.

“Hello, Grandma,” said Kris, approaching her a bit warily, and was surprised when she put an arm around him and patted his shoulder.

“Hello, Kristopher,” she said, quickly stepping back from him and looking at Adam’s mother, who was standing a few feet away.

“Everyone, I’d like you to meet Leila, Adam’s mom.” He turned to her and said, “This is Kim, Neil, my brother Daniel and my grandmother, Sylvia.”

Leila beamed at them all, but walked straight up to Sylvia first. “I am so happy to meet you at last,” she said in calm tone, “thank you for traveling all this way to be with us.”

Sylvia’s eyes went a little wide, as if she hadn’t expected such politeness from a liberal, Los Angeles woman. She nodded and held out her hand to Leila. “Thank you, it’s my pleasure to be here.”

“Well, that sounds lovely,” she replied, her eyes growing soft and warm in a way Kris hadn’t seen since he was a very small child.

I’ll be damned. Kris shared a look with his parents, Danny and Adam, who had all been staring at Leila with glowing respect and in Adam’s case, pride.

It was only after Sylvia turned to Kim that Leila did so, too, and a palpable energy seemed to flash between the two mothers. Without a word they embraced rather fiercely, and a few sniffles reached Kris’ ears. He grasped Adam’s hand again, basking in the moment he’d been anticipating for a long time. His heart threw up its proverbial arms and cheered.

“I…I don’t understand,” said Sylvia, looking bewildered, “have you two met?”

“No,” said Leila, “but our sons have made each other very, very happy.” She wiped at her eyes and let go of Kim, who started rummaging for a handkerchief. “I guess love is contagious.”

Adam, it appeared, couldn’t contain himself and swept Kris up into his arms, giggling and kissing him. They ignored Sylvia’s confused stuttering and huffing sounds as they spoke to each other silently with a few more pecks to the lips. Leila moved to Neil and Danny next and by the time everyone was properly introduced, Kris couldn’t remember why he’d been so nervous this morning. This is gonna be fantastic.

After loading up Leila’s minivan with luggage and the large box, everyone piled in – Syliva was given the front seat – and they headed off to the Lambert house. Sitting in the way back between his mother and Adam, Kris daydreamed about a spectacular wedding where all of his family was there supporting his commitment to Adam, even Grandma Sylvia. He was pretty sure that part would never happen, but it was fun to fantasize. “Hey,” he whispered to his boyfriend, “how about we watch Maurice when we get home tonight.” The film, telling the story of love between a gay couple, was incredibly romantic and hopeful. Perfect for Kris’ mood.
“But we’ve seen that one over a dozen times.”

“I know, but I love it so much. Pleeasse?”

“Awww, no fair using the Fifi eyes,” chuckled Adam as he ruffled Kris’ hair. “You know I can’t resist.”

Kris bounced happily in his seat during the rest of the drive and even let his mother smother him with hugs and kisses. He heard her gasp loudly when they pulled up to the grand house, and suddenly hoped she wouldn’t feel ashamed of her more humble means. “Nice isn’t it,” he said to her, “but it’s seriously lacking in the tree house and southern charm department.”

Adam, catching on quickly, joined in. “Not to mention that my mom wouldn’t stand a chance at making those incredible sweet rolls of yours. What’s a fancy house without the aroma of cinnamon and sugar wafting through it?”

Kim turned to them and smiled. “You’re both very sweet. Now be quiet and let me enjoy the view in silence.”

Surprised, Kris raised his eyebrows. “Sure thing, ma,” he said, looking at her with new admiration.

“What magnificent architecture,” Neil declared as he got out of the van. “I can’t wait to see the inside.”

But however unaffected his parents appeared, once they were standing in the entrance hall it was obvious by the faint blushes and downcast eyes that they must be feeling at least a little embarrassed or unsure of themselves. Even Sylvia, who was usually successful in hiding almost all emotion except disapproval, looked uncomfortable. Danny, on the other hand, had no problem in saying, “holy crap! Adam, you lucky dude! There better be a pool table in a house like this.”


“Yes there is, but I’d watch out if I were you. Once Adam’s brother finds out you like to play, you might never get out of the game room.”

“When’s his flight coming in?” Adam asked excitedly.

“Not until five, now let’s all help the Allens get settled and then we’ll have lunch and a tour of the house. I’ll show Sylvia to her room and Adam, I’ve made up the west end guest rooms for everyone else. I’ll leave it up to you to be a good host and get them anything they need while I take care of Sylvia.”

“Thank you, Leila,” said Kris’ grandmother, allowing herself to be led away by the elbow.

As soon as she was gone Kris turned to his parents. “She seems really…quiet, I guess. I didn’t expect her ‘best behavior’ to be so quiet. It’s because of Grandpa, isn’t it?”

Kim nodded as Adam led them to the west side of the house. “She’s devastated of course, but she’ll never admit it, and I think she’s very lonely. We’re all…still struggling,” said Kim, biting her lip. Kris’ dad put an arm around her and she gave him a grateful, yet watery smile. It was nice to see her take comfort in his compassion.
My poor mama though. Kris still missed his grandfather terribly and he could only imagine how his mother and grandmother must feel. “I’m surprised you guys came here,” he said, “I thought you might not be up for it.”

“Oh honey, of course we’d come to see you graduate! Wouldn’t miss it for the world.” She put down her bag and cupped Kris’ face, looking steadily into his eyes. “Don’t you worry about any of us, okay? This is your time to celebrate…we’re all here for you, just for you.”

And in that moment Kris felt the truth of the fact that with tragedy comes opportunities for growth. Very rarely had she spoken to him like that, as if she didn’t need him to spend all his time making sure everyone else was okay. “You’re amazing, ma,” he said, trying not to tear up. She patted him gently on the cheek, picked up her suitcase and continued walking up the stairs. Wow. Who is that woman and what has she done with my mother?

“Well, here we are,” said Adam, stopping outside a beautifully appointed room. “Kim and Neil, this one is yours and Danny, you’re next door.

“Oh my goodness. Adam, this is so…luxurious!” Kim gasped as she went inside and looked around. “I feel like I’m at a hotel!”

Adam chuckled. “Good. The only wake up service we offer though is Neil stomping around the house in the morning.” Kris snickered, remembering how very true that was on the occasions he’d spent the night there.

“Your parents have very fine taste,” said Neil, examining the art that decorated the room. “I hope the rocking chair will fit in.” He glanced at Adam with furrowed brows.

“Are you kidding me? Your work is gorgeous,” Adam assured him. “They’ll be totally blown away. I can’t believe you brought that all the way here…they’ll want to pay you for it, you know.”

“Well too bad. It’s a gift and they’ll just have to accept that.” He turned to Kim, smiled, and then looked back at Adam and Kris. “We’re going to freshen up a bit before lunch if you don’t mind.”

“Go right ahead,” said Adam. “There should be towels in your bathroom, soap and shampoo, too.”

After showing Danny to his room, Adam grabbed Kris’ hand and they took off down the hallway. For them, the Lambert house was a play castle full of innumerable places to makeout and act like naughty children. A minute later they were in Adam’s old bedroom with the door closed behind them.

“Hi,” said Kris, gazing up into Adam’s beautiful eyes, getting just as lost in them as he had the very first day they’d met at Macy’s.

Adam walked them to the little bed and lowered Kris down onto it. “Hi.”

The room held some very fond memories for the couple now, and as Adam licked into Kris’ mouth, Kris was transported back to the night they’d made love in the moonshine on this very bed. He moaned softly, recalling in detail the way Adam had looked in the mirror with all that pale light beaming on him. His hand found its way up the back of Adam’s shirt as they kissed each other hungrily.
There was a loud knock on the door. “I though I told you to be a good host!” barked Leila.

“Everyone is fine!” Adam called back, rolling his eyes. “They said they wanted time to freshen up before lunch!”

“Well then come downstairs and help me set the table. You two can screw around when we don’t have guests to take care of.”

Kris giggled. “Your mom takes hospitality seriously, doesn’t she?”

“You have no idea,” Adam groaned, dropping his forehead to Kris’ chest, “plus I know she’s trying to impress your family.” He sighed and sat up. “Come on.”

**

Mr. Lambert came home from a business meeting just as lunch was about to be served. He looked tired, but smiled upon seeing everyone seated around the table. “Welcome,” he said, walking around and shaking hands with Kris’ family, who had risen to their feet to greet him.

Kris’ stomach fluttered nervously as he remembered the fight between Adam and Eber about his parents. *Will he like them? And what about Grandma? Oh god, please let this all go well.* He saw Eber’s jaw stiffen when the man shook Sylvia’s hand and hoped that no one else had noticed.

“Please excuse my husband for being late,” said Leila, throwing Eber a look that made it clear she’d noticed. “Adam, will you start serving the meal while I talk to your father?”

Kris began to worry again.

“What does Eber do for a living?” asked Sylvia, looking miffed.

“He’s the CEO of a retail company called For Your Entertainment,” said Adam calmly as he brought a platter of pulled pork sandwiches to the table.

“I see. And your mother?”

Adam set down a bowl of salad before responding. “She’s a volunteer landscaper. Maybe you’d like to see her garden sometime? It’s really beautiful.”

“Oh I love gardens!” said Kim, cutting off Sylvia who’d been about to say something. “And you do, too, mother. Let’s ask Leila to show us around after lunch.”

“Don’t tell me what I love,” Sylvia growled.

An awkward silence followed. Kris didn’t like the frown on his mother’s face, but he didn’t know what to do. *It’s not my problem, right?* He wasn’t sure. Somehow it felt like his problem because they were in Adam’s house and Adam was his boyfriend.

Just as the tension climbed another notch, Leila and Eber returned. “I’m so sorry about that,” said Leila, picking up two more dishes from the counter and bringing them to the table.
Adam’s dad sat down right across from Sylvia. “My wife would like me to apologize for any rudeness I might have conveyed by my less than cordial greeting.”

“How is that so?” she said, glaring at him.

“It is, but I don’t always do what she wants me to. You see I really want to like you, because you are the grandmother of a person who has made my son happier than I’ve ever seen him.” Adam grinned at Kris as his father continued. “Do you know what it’s like to see your child hurting for a very long time?” he asked her, leaning across the table, and Adam’s smile faltered. “Do you know how incredible it feels as a parent, when after years of despairing, your child finally finds love and happiness? It’s the greatest gift a parent could ever ask for. Can you understand that? Can you understand how very much I want to like you for raising the woman who gave birth to Kris?”

Sylvia’s mouth actually fell open a bit. “But, you don’t like me?” she asked, sounding shockingly frail all of a sudden.

“I want to, ma’am, but I’m afraid that you might not treasure the gift as I do. I’m afraid that you might not see it as the miracle it is.”

No one spoke or moved, as if doing so would break the magic spell that seemed to have settled over the table. It felt like ages passed before Sylvia, her eyes darting around, whispered, “but it’s wrong. The Bible says so.”

Eber shook his head. “I’d love to discuss this further with you, but I’m worried that my wife will kill me if I continue to delay lunch. Please forgive me,” he said, looking around the table, “I’m rather opinionated and, as Adam has pointed out in the past, a bit overprotective of my children.”

“A bit?” Adam snorted. “You would’ve had me on one of those kid leashes if mom hadn’t stopped you. And don’t mess with Kris’ family or I’ll find an adult leash and tie you to a tree out back.”

Almost everyone laughed at that, which effectively broke the tension. Leila sighed in a long-suffering sort of way, but kissed Eber on the temple nevertheless. Kris could tell that she loved him for exactly who he was.

“I’d like someone to say grace,” Sylvia stated in a voice lacking its usual force. Her defenses were obviously down. It was a rare and marvelous thing, but Kris, oddly enough, hoped people would tread lightly while she was feeling vulnerable. As he listened to Daniel recite grace, he tried to absorb what had just taken place.

After lunch Leila and Eber took the Allens on a tour of the house and grounds outside. Kris and Adam tagged along, holding hands and watching their families interact. “I think my grandma likes your mom,” said Kris as they strolled through the gardens.

“Yeah. I wonder what she’ll think of Nana though. I have visions of World War Three in my head,” he laughed.

“Oh god, I swear if that happens tonight, we’re going home even if it’s in the middle of dinner.”

“What? And miss all the fireworks?”

Kris punched him on the shoulder. “I wish it was that easy for me not to care if people are mad at
“You’re the one who wanted Nana to come to dinner, but I can always call her and ask her not to come.” Adam gave Kris’ hand a squeeze. “She’ll understand, you know.”

“No,” said Kris emphatically, “I love Nana and I want my parents to meet her. We’ll just have to deal and -- hey, look at that,” he said, pointing at his mother and Leila, who were walking shoulder to shoulder and chuckling about something with their heads together like best friends often do.

_Freaking awesome. Whatever happens, this is worth it._

***

Everything started out all right that evening, what with Neil coming home from New York and discovering that Danny was serious friend material. The two hit it off immediately by entertaining everyone with ‘let’s see how much we can embarrass Kris and Adam.’ They told story after story until their brothers had enough and started to retaliate with equally embarrassing tales. It was during this hilarity that Nana arrived for dinner. She welcomed Kris’ parents and Danny with open arms and was even polite (though brisk) to Sylvia.

She insisted on sitting next to Kris during the meal, however, and poured lavish amounts of positive attention on him. She congratulated him for sticking with school, fawned over his prospects at getting a record deal and kept telling him how handsome he was.

This did not go over well with Sylvia, nor did the way Nana went on about how charming Kim and Neil were and what a fantastic job they’d done in raising Kris. “Yes, you should be very proud of your son. So many wonderful qualities, and he’s got such incredible taste in men, too,” she said, winking at Adam.

“That’s quite enough,” said Sylvia coldly.

Nana turned and looked at her with narrowed eyes. “I beg your pardon?”

“You heard me. I know what you’re doing, what you’re trying to prove.”

An air of terrible anticipation filled the room as if everyone were expecting a tornado to come ripping through at any moment. Kris, who’d been soaking up all the love, suddenly felt the warmth in his heart turn to icy fear. He covered his face with his hands, not even noticing Danny and Neil leaving the room or Adam scooting closer and putting an arm around him. _Please no, please…no…_

“What on earth are you talking about?” snapped Nana.

“Don’t play the fool! I see you, trying to show that you’re a better grandmother than me, trying to steal my grandson away from me!” She stood up and banged her fists on the table.

“What utter nonsense!” Nana threw back. “I’m doing no such thing!”

“I’m not blind, woman!” roared Sylvia. Her face was livid but Kris saw a few tears gathered in the corners of her eyes. “You think I don’t know that Kristopher prefers your company…all of you!” she half-sobbed, gesturing at Leila and Eber, too. “You think it’s easy watching him be like part of your
family when I can’t…when I don’t know how…” Her lower lip quivered like a wobbly arrow notched in a bow, not sure which direction it would fly once released.

“Mom,” said Kim in concern, touching her mother’s arm.

“Don’t Kimberly! No one can comfort me! No one understands!” And with that she tottered out of the dining room, tears streaking down her paper-thin skin.

Kim got up and followed her. “Don’t cry, momma, please don’t cry! I’ll make it all better,” she called as she hurried to her mother’s side. Kris’ father moved as if to join them, but then he sat back down and shook his head sadly.

People started saying things, but Kris heard none of it. He was numb. Too much painful information had knocked the wind right out of him. Witnessing his grandmother break down like that was a shock, and then his own mother behaving exactly as he used to, even saying the same words he’d said to her so many times. Don’t cry, I’ll make it all better. He suddenly wanted to yell at Nana for no good reason. He wanted to run to his grandmother and…make it all better. Kris fell sideways into Adam’s embrace, feeling lost.

“I’m so sorry,” he heard Nana whisper, looking horrified.

“Don’t be,” said Kris robotically, “you did nothing wrong.”

Leila rose to her feet, staring daggers at her husband. “I told you she needed kindness, didn’t I? And instead you just broke her open with that clever speech of yours at lunch!”

“Stop,” said Neil. “You all need to stop this. No one is at fault here. Sylvia is vulnerable because of her husband’s recent death and none of you are to blame for her sadness or anger.” He glanced at Nana, Eber and Leila and smiled. “I for one am glad that Kris feels like he has a home away from home with such loving and open people.”

Kris peeked out from Adam’s blanketing arms, gearing up to emerge from the security and face everyone. He would’ve preferred to have a shouting match with his grandmother rather than deal with this. She’s supposed to be strong. She’s always been strong. Gripping his pendant, he wondered what would a wild child do in this situation. What’s the brave thing to do?

Adam leaned down close to Kris’ ear and whispered, “you all right, angel? Want to go home?”

“No,” he muttered. After another minute, he left his warm cocoon and sat up straight. Everyone was looking at him, including his mother and Grandma Sylvia who had just walked in and sat down. Their eyes were red and puffy. At least they came back. Kris took a deep breath. “This gathering isn’t just about me and my graduation,” he said, “it’s about our families getting to know each other. None of us is perfect, obviously, but we’d better get used to that because Adam and I are always going to be together. No tears or messed up family patterns or differences of opinion will ever change that. So…just deal and move on. We’re all doing the best we can.” And that was all Kris could think of to say at the moment.

Adam was the first to speak up after Kris stopped talking. “I’m going to kiss this man now,” he stated, “and everyone better get used to that, too.” He took Kris’ chin with thumb and forefinger, and placed a kiss so sweet to his lips that Kris melted a little despite the inner turmoil still going on.

When they finally drew apart with lingering fingers and nuzzling touches, Kris looked at his
grandma. “I love you very much,” he said, “thank you for being here.” She smiled at him and nodded. Kris thought about her words, the words she’d said about not knowing how to…what? Love? Show affection? He pitied her, but vowed not to let that make him tiptoe or cater to her. Those days were over.

By the time dessert was being served outside in the garden, things were still not okay. Tension bubbled in pockets here and there when people weren’t sure how to interact with Sylvia, but then again, Kris had never seen his mother bond with a woman the way she was doing with Leila. And Adam spent several hours catching up with his brother while Eber gave Mr. Allen some tips about the business he was trying to start.

In the corner of the yard under a large tree sat Sylvia with Kris and Daniel on the ground by her knees. She had one hand on each of their shoulders, but said nothing to them whatsoever. As for Nana, she mingled with everyone, dropping lines of communication like a spider between them all, weaving a web that would eventually be strong enough to weather a storm.

No, things were not perfect, but they were good enough.

***

Much later that night Adam and Kris finally dragged into their apartment, exhausted beyond belief. Wearily, they took care of their beloved Fifi, stripped and fell into bed. Neither could find words to talk about the events of the day, but it didn’t matter. As they lay facing one another in the semi dark, Kris was certain that his heart would overflow with love and drown them both. Fingertips caressed cheeks and lips. Fifi yawned and curled up on a corner of the bed. All was quiet.

***

The sun rose on Saturday, May 22nd without realizing the importance of its dawning on that particular day. It couldn’t know that in a little over eight hours, Kris would be officially done with school. Nor was it able to predict the momentous events that would take place before night fell or how the world would be different tomorrow. No, all the sun cared about was fulfilling its purpose, to climb into the sky and shed its life-giving warmth over the land. As it changed from orange to bright yellow, however, its rays snuck through the trees outside Kris and Adam’s bedroom and tapped on their window as if to say, “get up sleepyheads, I promise you won’t regret it.” But the couple slept on, their dreaming minds and entwined bodies ignoring the birdsong and sunlight outside.

Kris finally woke two hours later when he heard a quiet sniffle. He opened his eyes just in time to see Adam wipe a tear away. “Hey, you all right?”

Adam nodded and smiled softly. “Yeah, just thinking.” He drew Kris to his chest, wrapping him up tightly. “Remember when we first met?”

“Course I do,” said Kris, stifling a yawn and snuggling deep into Adam’s warm embrace. I’ll never, ever forget that day. “What made you think about it?”
“I had a dream that we were back there, at Macy’s. It was so vivid, so real, and all I cared about was getting in your pants.” Adam chuckled, kissing the top of Kris’ head. “Don’t get me wrong, I still care about getting in your pants,” he said as Kris started to laugh, “but when I woke up and saw you sleeping there, so peaceful and so…mine… I don’t know, it just made me think about everything we’ve been through since then. I’m so lucky I found you,” he whispered with another sniff. “I’d be lost and lonely, still doing the same shit over and over again…hurting myself.”

Kris felt Adam’s body shake with repressed sobs. The sadness is still there…my poor Adam. He shifted up so he could cradle his love and whispered, “let it out, baby, it’s okay.”

“I d-don’t want to,” Adam snuffled, clinging to Kris, “it’s your graduation…supposed to be… happy.”

“Doesn’t matter, just let it go.” He brushed a hand down Adam’s cheek and for some reason the gentle touch unloosed the flood of tears. Adam wept openly, releasing the pain and hurt that was stored deep inside, but it only went on for a minute. Maybe there’s less in there now, Kris thought as he rubbed Adam’s back soothingly. The idea made him smile a little. The poison is going away, bit by bit.

Adam coughed a few times and then grew silent. For a while they just lay there cuddling as Adam’s tears dried on Kris’ chest. A ray of sunshine fell onto their faces. “That wasn’t so bad,” Adam finally whispered, and Kris kissed his warm lips, feeling that the moments of pain Adam had to endure to get rid of the sadness were worth it.

***

“Now don’t forget I’m in the second section on the right near the end of the first row, make sure to sit on the right,” said Kris as he checked to make sure he had everything. He patted the outside pocket of his backpack, felt the small object in there and shivered. Tonight.

“I won’t forget,” Adam said, grinning at him. “We’ll all be there around one. That’s an hour before the ceremony starts so I’m sure we’ll find good seats.”

“Okay.” Kris slung his backpack over his shoulder and removed his cap and gown from the hook on the back of the door. “Okay,” he said again, “I’m ready.” He looked down at Fifi who was sitting by his feet and then at Adam, suddenly feeling the weight of the moment. “I’m gonna graduate, holy shit.”

Adam laughed and pecked his lips. “Yes you are, angel. I’m so proud of you, now get going before you’re late for the party.”

The Music Department was throwing a pre-ceremony bash at ten-thirty and it was already ten-fifteen. Kris hadn’t wanted to give up any snuggle time with Adam this morning. He gave Fifi and quick scratch behind the ears, picked up his guitar and finally left for the UCLA campus.

The party was a good time, mostly because Kris got to catch up with his school friends and chat about what the future would bring. He didn’t hesitate to announce that a record label was interested in signing him and flushed with pride when everyone congratulated him. Kris also played a few of the songs he’d written and got a wonderful response. A tinge of sadness crept over his heart that it’d
taken him this long to be himself among his classmates. *At least I managed it before graduating.*

By the time the party was over, Kris only had twenty minutes to change and get to Dodd Hall for the graduation check-in. While everyone else just pulled on their gowns over slacks and dresses, Kris went to the bathroom to prepare his little surprise. He also transferred the small object from his backpack to his pants pocket because there was no way he was going to leave it unattended. He felt nervously giddy when he came out a few minutes later and headed over to the Dodd Hall auditorium, wondering if he was going to get in a shitload of trouble later. He couldn’t bring himself to care all that much.

The trickier part of his plan was getting hold of Matt’s cell phone. After checking in, there was still about fifteen minutes to go before they had to line up, so Kris went to visit Matt in the room where all the Theater Department students were waiting. “Matt,” he called as he neared his best friend, “can I borrow your phone? I really need to call Adam and I left mine at home.”

“No problem, is everything okay?” asked Matt with concern as he handed over his phone.

“Yeah, I’ll just be a minute. Thanks man.” Kris walked out into the hallway and quickly used his own phone to send a file to Matt’s, then changed a few settings. After taking the cell off silent and making sure the volume was all the way up, he returned it hoping that Matt wouldn’t re-check to see if it was on silent for the ceremony. Please let this work, he thought as he joined his classmates, who were doing last minute adjustments to their caps and brown tassels. The fledgling rebel inside Kris was just itching to be let loose on the world.

Fortunately each major school of UCLA had its own graduation ceremony otherwise commencement would probably take a whole week to get through. But Kris was still stunned as he lined up for the procession at the sheer number of graduate and undergraduate students in the School of Art, which encompassed everything from visual art to music to drama. He leaned out of line, looked way back and gave Matt the thumbs up. *Here we go! Hope Adam got a good seat.*

He heard the processional music begin to play and slowly the students moved forward, anticipating the moment when friends and loved ones would see them thanks to the large projection screen above the stage. Kris expected his mother to do something embarrassingly cute and, as he emerged out into the auditorium, he wasn’t disappointed.

“Kristopher! Over here, sweetie! Over here!”

Kris immediately started searching for the source of his ma’s voice and soon spotted her a few rows up from ground level on the right, waving energetically with a handkerchief in her hand. He waved back, thrilled at seeing everyone sitting together. He hadn’t been sure if Adam’s family would come when he’d invited them, but they all insisted that they wouldn’t miss it. Hand after hand rose into the air to greet him and everyone smiled, even Grandma Sylvia. Kris tried to keep walking, but almost stumbled when Adam blew him a kiss, his plump lips puckering into a perfect glossy ring. Beaming, Kris returned the gesture and the two of them grinned stupidly at each other until someone poked him in the back and told him to get a move on.

On the way to his seat he saw Matt’s parents, too, and they looked downright gleeful as they hollered their son’s name. Alisan, sitting next to them in a beautiful lilac dress, wolf whistled at Matt and he took a bow. With a snort at the antics of his former roommate, Kris filed into the rows and stood, waiting for the signal to sit down. He couldn’t help but look to the side every once in a while just to get a glimpse of his temporary posse. *It’s all about me right now, and that’s all right. That’s how it’s supposed to be.* The third time he glanced at them, he caught sight of Adam making a little heart with
his thumbs and fingers in front of his chest. Kris giggled and made kissy faces at him, totally unconcerned about what anyone else might think of their sappy behavior. Grandma Sylvia’s face was impassive, unreadable, but Kris didn’t spend any energy fretting over what might be going on in that brain of hers.

When all the students were in their respective places, the music ceased and the Dean walked onto the stage. He welcomed everyone and told the class of 2010 that they could sit. A sea of black hats went down in one smooth motion. And now for the boring speeches. Kris tried to pay attention, he really did, but after the third speaker started in with the ‘reach for your dreams’ spiel he found himself getting lost in wedding scenes. His eyes glazed over as he imagined walking down the aisle and offering a lifetime of commitment to his one true love. The bird of his heart fluttered its wings against his ribcage.

A loud applause broke Kris’ concentration and he heard someone say that it was time to announce the candidates for graduate degrees. Almost there, he thought as he watched the first row of graduate students rise. Kris surreptitiously pulled out his cell and typed a text to Adam. ‘you look delicious in that white button down.’ He turned his head and saw Adam smirk before typing a reply.

‘are you naked under the gown?’

Kris tried not to chuckle out loud. ‘you wish’

‘yup’

‘well maybe we can play professor and student again later tonight.’ Kris looked over again and had to bite his lip not to laugh as Adam’s eyes went wide.

‘bad rabbit’

‘your fault for being so hot’

‘tease’

‘learned from the best’

‘hey, did you know a cute guy has been checking you out this whole time?’

Kris was pretty sure Adam was pulling his leg, but he couldn’t help but wonder. ‘oh yeah? which one?’

‘well he’s got blue eyes and these crazy freckles’

“Ha!” Kris barked, but thankfully the sound was drowned out by cheering for one of the grad students receiving her diploma. ‘you dork,’ he typed back.

At that moment Kim leaned over and whispered something into Adam’s ear. Grinning, Adam went back to his phone. ‘your momma says she loves you’

Kris blew her a kiss and mouthed, ‘I love you, too.’

After that sweet exchange he sat quietly and waited, his mind drifting to the graduation party at the Lamberts that would take place later and what he intended to do there. His nerves jangled a little as if
a soft breeze had blown in and stirred them from their slumber. He attempted to shush them, murmuring that everything was going to work out just fine.

“Will the candidates for Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Music please rise?”

Kris rose to his feet along with his fellow classmates and he shot one last look at his loved ones before facing forward to concentrate. The Chair of the Music Department stepped up to the podium. “Will the candidates please come to the stage?” Kris remained standing in the first row while the rest of the class sat back down to await the signal from the student marshal to rise again. He was really glad that his last name was Allen, but still there were eight students in front of him. The Abbott triplets always came first, then Trevor Ackerly, April Adams, Lee Agosta, Jeff Aldrich, and Brad Alexander. His row filed out, walked past the section of graduate students and up the ramp at the end of the stage. “Ladies and gentlemen,” said the Chair, “please hold your applause until the end.”

Yeah right. That never happens. Kris fussed with the zipper of his gown, muttering anxiously to himself. “I’m a wild child, a rebel…unpredictable. I can do this.”

“Sarah Jeanine Abbott.”

Sarah’s family cheered for her as Kris knew they would. He watched her move onto the stage. Shake hands, take diploma, smile for the camera. In less than a minute the students before him had crossed the stage and Kris was stepping up for his turn. Ahhhhhhhh!

“Aaahhh!”

“Kristopher Neil Allen.”

A burst of noise came from a small section of the crowd as the Allens, the Lamberts, the Girauds and Alisan all called his name, whooping and clapping enthusiastically. Grinning from ear to ear and his face bright pink, Kris walked forward, shook the Dean’s hand and accepted the diploma cover. He heard the click of the camera, saw the flash and tried to smile extra bright for his momma. Then it was on to shake the hands of the Vice-Dean and finally the Chair of the Music Department.

Showtime. In the split second before the next student was announced, Kris unzipped his gown and pulled it wide open to expose a white T-Shirt bearing the words, “I LOVE YOU, ADAM!” in large black letters. For an instant the image of Kris and his declaration filled the entire projection screen, blowing up the moment for even those in the way back to see. The crowd’s reaction was so boisterous that it paused the ceremony. There were gasps of astonishment, loud hoots of approval from Matt and the Lamberts and then, above the din came Adam’s strong voice. “I LOVE YOU, TOO, ANGEL!”

Amidst the laughter and cheering Kris giggled, blushing to the roots of his hair. He waved at his lover and then exited the stage in a hurry. He didn’t, after all, want to mess up anyone else’s special moment. His body seemed to float back to his seat, only jarred by slaps to his back as he passed other students. Some looked upset, but he didn’t fucking care. He was a cloud, full to the brim with courage and ready to rain on anyone who stood in his way.

From that moment forward Kris’ life would be different. He’d just come out to the entire school and no doubt there’d be something about his little stunt in the local papers. Kris, the model student who had always followed the rules. Kris, who’d pretended to be straight at family events for years. Kris, the man who’d just disrupted an entire graduation ceremony by publicly declaring his love for another man. The tiny part of him that was terrified at what he’d done took a back seat as the pride settled in and hugged him tightly. I did it! I did it!
Flushed with success and self-satisfaction, he nearly missed Adam waving at him like a maniac from the stands. He’s proud of me, too. Kris sought his parents’ faces, a little afraid of what he’d find on them, but it was okay. They looked a somewhat stunned but still smiled genuinely. In fact, everyone except Grandma Sylvia seemed happy. Her mouth was as thin as he’d ever seen it. Oh well, can’t please ‘em all!

Only seconds after Kris returned to his seat, a text message made his pocket vibrate. He said, “thanks, man,” to Brad Alexander and then pulled out his phone. Five words appeared on the little screen, five words that made Kris stop breathing. ‘I’m your bottom slave tonight.’ He coughed, forced his eyes back into his head and turned to look at Adam, whose expression was one of deep desire. Someone was talking, congratulating the music students, but Kris didn’t hear a thing except for the blood pounding in his ears.

His fingers trembled as he typed, ‘hell yeah you are.’ He spent the next thirty minutes fantasizing about fucking Adam - those pale, firm thighs quivering, blue eyes dark and lusty as Kris snapped his hips again and again. With great difficulty he finally bullied his mind to leave those glorious thoughts because he needed to pay attention so he wouldn’t miss Matt’s entrance onto the stage.

“Will the candidates for Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Theater please rise?”

Kris waited for the first third of the alphabet to pass before he saw Matt, wearing those cute dimples that Ali loved so much and beaming widely as he strutted towards the stage. The applause for Matt was very loud - he was obviously popular among his class - and Kris shouted right along with Alisan, the Girauds, the Allens and Adam. Matt did everything with a sufficient amount of professionalism, but gave a cheeky smile to the crowd before leaving the stage. Kris smirked, knowing that the man had no idea what was about to happen.

When the last of the theater students were headed back to their seats, Kris got ready, holding one finger over the call button on his phone. The Chair of the Theater Department opened his mouth to congratulate the students. Now! Kris pushed Matt’s name. And there in the middle row of the third section back, the notes of a song blared into the silence. Kris whipped around and tried to get a glimpse of Matt’s face, but all he could see were hundreds of black caps turning in the direction of the sound.

Suddenly a hand shot up into the air, clutching a phone that was playing: “We are the champions my friend! And we’ll keep on fighting till the end!” Everyone laughed as Matt began to wave his arm and conduct the song. Many in the class sang along, “We are the champions, we are the champions! No time for losers ‘cause we are the champions… of the world!” until it abruptly ended and went to voicemail. The people closest to him got to hear Matt’s recorded voice say, “I’m out walking my donkey but as soon as I get my ass back in I’ll call you back. Leave me a message.” Then the hand disappeared to a round of cheers and guffaws.

“Mr. Giraud,” said the Chair, chuckling a little, “I should have known.”

Kris snickered at the text message that immediately popped up. ‘unbelievable,’ it said.

‘you know you love me’

‘got that right. brilliant move, man! u’ve got balls’

‘someone once told me to grow a pair ;)’
The rest of the ceremony flew by, and before Kris knew it he was moving his tassel from right to left with everyone else, symbolizing the transition from candidate to graduate. The tradition might appear silly to some, but it still felt cool to Kris. A giddy joy infused his being, pulsing the length of his spine and shooting out to hands and feet. He was graduated, he’d done something fun and unexpected for his best friend and he’d shown the world that he wasn’t afraid to be himself.

“Congratulations, class of two thousand and ten!!”

A roar exploded from the students and over a thousand black caps filled the air like a flock of birds, soaring high before careening back down into a chaotic mess. Cheers broke out everywhere and Kris got buried in hugs from his classmates. I’m free! No more lectures, no more playing stupid Christmas concerts! The graduates were supposed to line up again and march out the way they’d come in, but Kris totally ditched it and made a beeline for his family, smiling so hard that his cheeks hurt.

He found it impossible to reach them, however, because so many people had decided to skip the recessional too. “I’ll meet you outside!” he called over the crowd. His father nodded and gave him the thumbs up, but before Kris turned away he heard Adam cry, “heads up, angel!” and something soft landed in his arms. Kris looked down and started to cackle loudly. A stuffed black wolf and a snow white rabbit gazed back at him through glass eyes. They were joined at the leg by a child-sized tie. “I love you!” Kris hollered, still laughing as he was swept away by the press of people.

Making his way outside, Kris tucked his new fuzzy friends into the flared sleeve of his gown to protect them from getting knocked out of his hands. It took him nearly twenty minutes to break free of the crowd, and by the time he reached the lawn the sun had turned into a beautiful gold of late afternoon. It matched his mood perfectly. He only had a short time to wait before he spotted Adam sprinting towards him ahead of everyone else. With a shout of glee, Kris ran and jumped into his arms stuffed animals and all.

Their lips crashed together, seeking and tasting with an intensity that rivaled their first kiss.

“Stop hogging him!”

Kris let go of Adam’s tongue and looked up to see his mother beaming at him with her arms wide open. He grinned, told Adam to put him down and hugged his momma.

“Oh my baby boy,” she gushed, squeezing the life out of him, “I’m soooo proud of you!”

“Even though I--”

“Especially because you did that. You’re so brave, so much braver than I’ve ever been,” she whispered softly, and Kris thought he heard her sniffle.

“You’re brave, too, ma. The way you’ve been standing up for yourself, for me.”

Mother and son embraced for a little while longer, silently communicating their love and admiration for the other. After that Kris got passed around, first to his father who hugged him just as enthusiastically as Kim had, then to the strong arms of his brother and finally to Grandma Sylvia.

“That was very foolish, pulling a stunt like that,” she said, but drew him into an embrace that was
warmer than any he’d ever felt from her before.

“I love you too, Grandma.”

The Lamberts had their turn to congratulate him next, with handshakes from Eber and Neil and hugs from Nana and Leila. Adam stood by and watched with a tender smile on his face.

“Picture time!” called Adam’s brother, who whipped out a professional looking camera. Neil was an excellent photographer according to Adam. It was fun at first, Neil clicking away as Kris and Adam smooched, Kris standing with his family and then Adam’s, but after almost a half an hour of posing in every configuration possible, Kris started to grumble. “Are we done yet?”

Neil was straightening the diploma in Kris’ hand as he replied, “almost. Just a few more.”

Suddenly Kris noticed his grandma standing a few feet away. Her head was hanging down and her entire posture spoke of sadness and loss. *She’s probably missing Grandpa, wishing he were here.* I miss him, too. “I want one with me and her,” he said, taking her hand. “Just us two, okay?”

Everyone was silent, watching as Kris put an arm around her, and then Nana piped up just before Neil snapped the shot. “You look beautiful, Sylvia,” she said, and Sylvia smiled. Kris kissed her on the cheek. No matter how much she disapproved of his sexual identity, he still loved her very much. He hoped, no, he knew that she felt the same way about him. *She said she did and I believe her. Please let that not change after tonight.*

Just as he thought he was free from the camera, Matt and Alisan trotted over and it all started again. Neil went overboard with the pictures and he turned out to be really damn anal about getting everything perfect before pressing the button, even to the point of telling Alisan to tuck her hair behind her ear. “For the love of god!” Eber finally hollered, “either hurry up or hand over the camera!” In the end Kris knew it would all be worth it, but he couldn’t wait for the graduation party to get going. He was on a mission.

“What’s that in your pocket?” asked Adam, who was pressed up close to Kris for a picture at one point.

“Just a souvenir from the party earlier,” he lied, squeezing Adam’s ass in hopes that it would distract him from further curiosity. It seemed to work.

When Neil finally released them it was going on five o’clock, which meant there was just enough time to get to the Lambert house, fire up the barbeque and feed everyone before the sun started to set. Kris’ nerves seemed to get the best of him the moment he walked into the house. His hands were shaking so hard as he tried to help in the kitchen that Adam pulled him aside to ask what was wrong.

“Nothing’s wrong, I promise,” he said, letting his forehead fall to Adam’s chest. “Just…it’s been a long day I guess, so much excitement.”

Adam tilted his chin up until their eyes met. Those deep blue pools were searching, concerned. “Why don’t you go relax? Let me and mom take care of the food, alright? This is your party. Go enjoy it.”

“Okay,” Kris sighed, pecking him on the lips before joining the others outside in the yard. He temporarily soothed his jitters by playing a rousing game of volleyball with the other twentiesomethings who were there: Tommy and Megan, who Kris had invited several weeks ago, Neil Lambert, Danny and Matt and Alisan. Matt’s party wasn’t until the next day. Poor little Tommy got
walloped by the ball several times, but he was a good sport about it and didn’t even mind that Megan was a much better player, as was Alisan. In reality Kris was putting off something he really needed to do, something that scared the crap out of him. Rather than butterflies there were giant bats flapping around in his stomach, beating their wings against the hard surface of the truth that Kris absolutely had to go through with it.

He waited until after dinner though, because everyone is in better spirits on a full stomach, right? Whining childishly under his breath, he made his move and approached Grandma Sylvia with hesitant steps. She was sitting in the new rocking chair that Neil had crafted, which had received rave reviews from Leila and Eber. Sylvia rocked back and forth in it, actually looking peaceful for once. *And I’m going to ruin that, I just know it.* “Grandma? Can I talk to you a sec?” Sylvia nodded and Kris sat down on the ground in front of her.

He started by thanking her for coming and telling her how much it meant to him. Then, pulling his grandfather’s stone from his pocket for strength, he told her of his plan for later in the evening. “And I want you to be there, but if you can’t…I mean if you don’t want to, if you can’t handle it then that’s okay,” he said, trying to keep his composure. “But I’m doing it. There’s nothing you can say or do to stop me. I’m telling you this ahead of time out of respect for you, to give you the chance to be somewhere else in that moment.”

He thought his blood would freeze into solid ice at the look on her face. She said nothing, just stared at him with that awful expression of disapproval and disappointment. His brain tried to start up the old war, one side shouting that he should recant and apologize to make her happy, the other side putting up one hell of a defense. But Kris rose above it and refocused. “Whatever you decide is fine, but if you choose to stay then I need your word you won’t interfere.”

“I’ll let you know,” she said curtly, dropping her gaze to her lap, and Kris took this as a dismissal. He stood up and left, now desperate for some human warmth to revive him. He found it in his mother’s arms.

An hour later Leila turned on the yard lights and served dessert. It was a gorgeous evening. To the naked eye looking heavenward, the waxing moon was just inches from being full. Kris thought of the black wolf now resting with its rabbit up in Adam’s room and chuckled to himself. *What a cute pair.* Snuggled up to Adam on a wide bench, he smiled at the large pile of graduation presents still unopened. But that would have to wait. The time had come at last.

Kris stood up, shivering a little in anticipation. “Don’t move,” he said to Adam, who cocked his head to the side curiously. *He looks just like Fifi.* “Everyone, please gather round, I’d like to say a few words.” He found Grandma’s eyes and she bowed her head once, and then made a gesture with her hand as if to say, “go on, I’m staying.” Heart racing, he cleared his throat. “Thank you,” he said again, because his brain was shutting down with the sheer intensity of the moment. “Thank you,” he said again, because his brain was shutting down with the sheer intensity of the moment.

“I love you all, very much.” He cast his eyes around at them and started blinking rapidly to ward off a few tears. “And so…so I wanted to share this with you.” Trembling, he turned to face Adam, reached into his pocket and pulled out the small black box. Already there were gasps but Kris ignored them as he dropped to one knee, his world consisting of Adam and only Adam. And the man, the wolf, the vulnerable, trusting, loving, beautiful being before him started to cry. The tears rolled down his pale cheeks as Kris opened the box and said in a steady voice, “Adam Mitchell Lambert, will you marry me?”

Time slowed down. Every tear on Adam’s face glistened as it fell. His freckled lips quivered in the
silence. Kris took Adam’s hand and slipped the ring onto his finger. “Say yes,” he whispered, gazing with adoration into his lover’s eyes.

“Yes I’ll m-marry you, angel,” Adam sobbed, and he pulled Kris to him, right up onto his lap. “I n-never thought, I d-didn’t…I thought I’d die alone.” He held Kris’ face in his hands, weeping quietly.

“I’ll always be with you. I love you,” Kris murmured before closing the distance between their mouths, and then Adam was kissing him with such passion that Kris couldn’t help but moan even though his entire family was watching.

He tasted the sweetness of eternity on Adam’s tongue.

No one seemed to want to break the silence or spoil the scene with unruly clapping. It wasn’t until the lovers ran out of breath that the bomb of joy exploded around them. Leila, Eber, Kim, both Neils, Danny, Nana, Tommy, Megan, Matt and Ali – all of them raced to be the first to congratulate the couple. So may tears, so many smiles. One nod from Sylvia from ten feet away. Good enough. Better than I expected.

“This man,” Adam choked out after Leila and Kim had kissed him and Kris about twenty times each, “this man is…everything to me. Don’t anyone mess with him or you’ll have me to answer to.” They all chuckled, still beaming and trying to hug both men for the fourth time, Matt proclaiming loudly to anyone who’d listen that he was going to be the best man. Alisan punched him on the arm. “But that’s my job, right Adam?”

“You can’t be the best man, you’re a girl!” Matt exclaimed.

“But Adam will be a groom, too, you dork.”

“You can both be a best man,” Adam giggled, still snuffling and wiping his eyes on his sleeve. “But that means cross-dressing for you, Ali.”

“Fine, but I’m still wearing red high heels.”

“Ohhh, those will be amazing with a tux,” squealed Megan, clutching Tommy to her side. Kris noticed a fresh bruise on his cheek and frowned. “Will you play at our wedding?” he asked the tiny man.

“Yes!” Adam gasped, flapping his hands a little, “Tommy you absolutely have to play! Something that the peacocks can dance to!” The young adults stared at him, eyes wide. “What? So I want peacocks at my wedding, so what?”

Laughing, Tommy nodded. “I’ll try to find something worthy of peacock dancing.”

It was almost perfect, exactly the way Kris had envisioned it. His heart soared as Adam showed off the ring, a black and gold band representing ocean waves and the sun, although he wouldn’t know that until Kris had a private moment with him to explain. Nothing could mar the bliss filling every cell of Kris’ being, nothing except…

“But what about children?” Kim asked her husband in hushed tones. “They might never have any.”

Unfortunately it was Eber who overheard, and he did not looked pleased. “And what makes you think that?” he growled as he walked over to the Allens.
Kim blushed deeply. “I just meant, it won’t be the normal way, it won’t be easy.” But she seemed to realize she’d said the wrong thing at once. “No, not like that, I--”

“Normal? Normal? You think it’s normal for girls to get pregnant at thirteen? For men and women to reproduce and beat their kids? They,” he said sharply, pointing at Adam and Kris, “will be better parents than most heterosexual couples I know!”

“Hey! Hey now,” said Kris, disentangling himself from Adam. This wasn’t supposed to happen! “My mom just isn’t used to this, don’t yell at her,” he said rather bravely. “Our family comes from a very different culture. She needs time to adjust, but look how happy she is for us!”

“That’s right,” Adam joined in, “lay off my future mother-in-law.”

Kim’s mouth fell open at hearing this term. “Oh my god, you’re going to be my son-in-law.” Reality appeared to have hit.

“Thank goodness,” said Neil, slinging an arm around Adam, “because it’d be a shame for us not to be related.”

Adam laughed and the tension broke like a precariously balanced china cup crashing to the floor. “Sorry,” said Eber, “I just get--”

“Over-protective? Over-opinionated? Over-bearing?” Leila offered helpfully as she stepped up to her husband.

“Yes…sorry,” Eber grumbled.

Kim picked her jaw up off the ground and faced the man. “It’s quite all right. Just…just don’t let it happen again?” She winced at her own joke, as if she wasn’t sure if it had gone over okay.

“Yes ma’am,” came the chuckled reply, and Eber gave her a hug. “Families always argue, you know.”

“Families…yes, we’re going to be a family.”

Kris smiled at them. “That’s better. Now play nice while I borrow Adam for a minute.”

The ‘borrowing’ was more like a kidnapping. Kris gripped the hand of his ‘bottom slave’ and yanked him toward the house. He saw Nana and Grandma Sylvia having a heated discussion in the corner of the garden. Ha. Duke it out, ladies. Once inside Adam and Kris tore up the stairs until they reached Adam’s childhood bedroom.

“You see this ring?” Kris said after pushing his lover onto the bed and straddling him, “the black part is the ocean waves and the gold is the sun. It’s the beach,” he whispered, “so you can look at it and not be afraid.”

“I…I knew that somehow,” Adam whispered back, his eyes glistening again. “Please, angel, make love to me. My fiancé, my future husband,” he breathed, “make love to me.”

Kris brushed a thumb across Adam’s tear-stained face. “Fiancé,” he said, trying the word out. “I’m gonna marry you.” Kris leaned down, touching his lips to Adam’s and the softness he found there
made him shudder. “Gonna love you,” he murmured. With incredible tenderness, he unbuttoned Adam’s shirt, kissing every inch of bare skin that was revealed.

Adam’s body was somehow new to him, like he was discovering it for the first time. When he took a nipple into his mouth and sucked it between his teeth, the resulting sigh of pleasure sounded different to Kris’ ears, more beautiful than ever before. Perhaps the engagement ring had cast a spell over them. Perhaps it made the delicate skin of Adam’s length taste like a piece of heaven. Perhaps the feeling of sliding into him was like living in heaven. Perhaps they were madly in love.

Chapter 66

The ocean breathes. Even hundreds of miles from the Santa Monica coast where it appears to be flat and lifeless, beneath the surface its molecules are already gearing up to crash onto the far away shore. They travel, gathering force to make the beginnings of waves, rolling with increasing speed towards their destination and blending through at least ten different shades of blue along the way. Starfish and urchins get caught up the ride, hang on for dear life knowing that the end is near. And in the split second before the thunderous finale the waves arch with a great inhale and then let go, breathing the ocean’s beauty over sand and stone and scuttling crabs. Instantly the water pulls back onto itself and leaves a few sand dollars behind, inhales with a hushed rustling as if Poseidon were reeling a thousand silk scarves back into his fold.

“That’s my favorite part,” Adam murmured into Kris’ warm mouth, “right after the crash…like the water gets to rest a minute.” Kris sighed in response and arched into Adam as they continued to kiss on their little piece of beach heaven. Adam’s being was flooded with sensations – the warmth of the sun on his back, Kris’ body beneath him and the palpable love cascading through his veins. The old memories of horror and pain were there too but muted, faded around the edges like ancient photographs on tattered paper. They mocked the new, more pleasant experiences Adam was having in that moment. He told them to knock it the fuck off, went back to caressing Kris’ bare chest and contemplated his future.

I’m getting married. He could hardly believe it; it didn’t seem possible after so many years of thinking he’d always be a lonely whore. Adam rubbed the smooth black and gold proof with his thumb just to make sure it was still there. Hope he likes the engagement ring I got him. The ring was safely stashed in his Grandfather’s box at the moment. He giggled to himself and the old memories slunk even further away.

The couple was mostly alone, lying on a gigantic blue blanket way off to the side of the crowds where it was quiet and peaceful. Fifi, all curled up and napping, snuffled and twitched her front paws. A gentle breeze ruffled Adam’s hair. The atmosphere couldn’t have been more serene, and yet Adam was aware that he still had to expend energy to keep the bad memories from sneaking up on him. It’s fine, I’m doing good. I’m here aren’t I? He took a moment to focus on the slick softness of Kris’ tongue, sucking and tasting it and drawing moans of pleasure from his partner.

Neurons fired. Adam shifted on top of Kris. The past and the future disappeared in an instant and all that mattered was love. They ignored anyone passing by, paid no attention to whispers or muttering and made out on the sand for a good thirty minutes until Fifi woke up from her nap. She blinked sleepily, rose to her feet and tottered over to Kris and Adam.
“Go away, Fifi,” Kris mumbled after a lazy kiss, “your daddies are busy.”

Adam laughed softly. “Now angel, is that what you’re gonna say when one of our kids wants attention some day?”

“Course not,” said Kris with a naughty grin, “because we’ll put a sign up on the bedroom door that says ‘if this isn’t an emergency, come back later’.”

Eyes sparkling in amusement, Adam nipped Kris’ earlobe. “Oh is that how it’ll be? Sex before childcare?”

Kris just chuckled and pursed his lips in request for another kiss, which was gladly given of course. Fifi walked around their bodies until her leash, anchored by a heavy rock, pulled taut and then she snuggled up beside them in the late morning sun. In the stillness that followed, a menacing voice taunted Adam from the depths of his brain. No! Not now, everything’s going so well! Don’t take this away from me...please... He needed more distraction, something, anything to keep the evil at bay. Maybe it’s time to go home. Sheila said I shouldn’t push myself and we’ve been here for almost two hours. But just then Adam caught sight of the bright orange sand bucket that Kris had given him on his birthday.

“Let’s play in the sand, okay?” he said, trying not to sound afraid of what might happen in the next few moments if things didn’t shift fairly quickly.

Kris immediately latched onto the idea and untangled himself from Adam’s long limbs. “Absolutely! Think we can make a castle big enough for Fifi to live in?” He casually tossed Adam a few ice packs from the cooler and Adam loved him for knowing what to do without making a big fuss. The freezing sensations soaked into Adam’s palms, grounding him to the present. Kris started smoothing the sand in front of their blanket. “Tell me again about the time you found the starfish?”

While staring at Kris’ flexing arm muscles, Adam took a few deep breaths and was soon able to put the ice packs back in the cooler. Take that you fuckers! His face flushed with pride, he joined Kris and began to recount the tale. “So I was about eight years old,” he began as he used the toy shovel to fill the bucket, digging deep to find the wet sand, “and I was running away from Neil on the beach because he was pelting seaweed at me.” Kris chuckled. “Yeah yeah he was real cute,” snorted Adam. “Anyway, I was faster than him and he couldn’t catch me. Little bugger was scared of the deep water, too, so I ran into the ocean and laughed at him all screamin’ from the beach at me.” Without thinking Adam patted the sand into the bucket exactly the way he’d done as a child, making sure it was perfect and flat everywhere like he was measuring brown sugar for a recipe.

“And mom yelled at me, too, because I was going out pretty far,” he continued, “so I swam back to shore after Neil finally gave up and then...” Adam ran his hand across the smooth sand as he remembered how his toe had brushed something rough. “I felt it for a second and then the waves carried me back to the beach. I wasn’t sure what it was until it landed next to me on the sand. So pretty,” he sighed, “I mean I didn’t know they could be purple like that. I felt...special.” At this Adam looked over at Kris, blushing a little. “I was just a kid.”

“You were special,” said Kris fondly, as he always did when hearing this story. “Go on, my favorite part is coming up.”

Smiling, Adam quickly turned his bucket upside down. “I remembered about starfish, how they would die if they didn’t get thrown back into the water.” Adam had cried a bit at the thought of all those poor creatures that’d lost their lives on the shore. “Mom came over and hugged me and...”
There was warmth at his side and then all around him – Kris’ body enveloping him in a hug that spoke of love and pride. “Sand pretty?”

“It’s what I used to call my creations,” said Adam as he attempted to crawl into all the wonderful emotion pulsing between them.

Kris squeezed him tight and pressed a kiss to his cheek, murmuring, “you’re a sand pretty,” which was so damn cute and hysterical at the same time that Adam just about fell over laughing. “Heyyyyy I was trying to compliment you,” said Kris, pouting.

“I’m sorry angel, it’s just…you called me a sand pretty and…” He doubled up again, laughing until he could barely breathe. The rich, bubbling sound was so infectious that Kris started to giggle and punched Adam on the shoulder. Smiling ear to ear, the boys set to work on making a house for Fifi. Adam’s heart soared in the good memories he and Kris were building together, winged its way toward the faded menacing ones and beat them into submission with love. Adam could almost hear the echoes of Sam frantically trying to fend off the overzealous, happy heart. *I’m getting better. I’m not a damaged freak. I’m Adam Lambert, normal person with issues and a motherfucking awesome voice and a motherfucking awesome fiancé and a motherfucking awesome family.* He went on silently reciting why his life was motherfucking awesome.

Fifi began to sniff at her new play dwelling, which was looking more like a pyramid of bucket shaped cones than a castle. It’d been a long time and Adam was out of practice. “Let’s not forget to make a doorway,” said Kris, who’d just returned with some water to make more wet sand.

“Good point, and try to make sure the sand is packed down really tight before you turn it upside down,” said Kris, who’d just returned with some water to make more wet sand.

When the sun had reached its highest peak and started to descend Adam knew that it was time to leave. As he watched Fifi run in and out of the pyramid wagging her tail and yipping, emotional exhaustion threw itself at him and made a dent in the barricade that had been keeping Sam’s ghost away. There was just enough time to stand back and examine their work. “Needs a little glitter.”

“Agreed,” said Kris, and together they sprinkled the pretty with handfuls of dry sand. Adam had a powerful surge of nostalgia and this sustained him until he fell into bed an hour later, curled up in Kris’ arms still fully clothed.

Sleep rushed in and patted him on the back for his efforts. *I did good.* Yes you did, said his unconscious mind as it softly blanketed him.

***

Thursday, May 28th found Adam having a stare down with Alex in the middle of the Sew Your Soul workshop. ‘I’m not doing it.”
“You agreed to do it. You even set the terms yourself.”

“I changed my mind.”

“Too late for that I’m afraid,” said Alex, showing only a hint of annoyance on his face. “The media event is Saturday and there’s no time to get someone else. Ryan is dressing in the clothes you picked out for him and he’s expecting you to be there.”

Adam ground his teeth in frustration. I can’t do it, I won’t be able to handle it. Random strangers everywhere, cameras flashing and people asking me questions. No fucking way. Coward. “Let me bring a friend, let me bring Kris or someone I know.”

Alex shook his head and walked over to the jacket still being worn by a mannequin. “You want this jacket then you’ll work for it, remember? That was the deal. Get over whatever hesitations you have and take your place in the spotlight where you belong.” He removed the beautiful garment and held it out to Adam. “Wear this at the event.” Adam’s eyes popped and Alex quickly added, “You can borrow it…for…to…you know…” Seemingly at a loss, he scrubbed at his beard and abruptly disappeared behind the drawing board.

Holy mother of god. Adam gaped at the jacket in his hands, wishing he had x-ray vision to see through the drawing board and into his boss’ mind. He’d never seen Alex like that, wrong-footed and unsure of himself, not to mention the compliment about Adam belonging in the spotlight. Somehow he knows wearing the jacket will help me, but I made him promise not to get personal. No wonder he got all flustered. This kind of faith, the kind that Adam’s family, Alisan and Kris had shown him, seemed to fill in where his confidence was lacking. Despite the fact that Alex’s motivations might be selfish, Adam still felt the warm glow of determination flare up and a strong desire to be worthy of such faith.

“I’m taking this home with me tonight,” he said to Alex, who merely grunted. “And I’m not bringing it back here until Monday.” Grunt. Adam supposed that was all he could expect from the man at this point. Their relationship was bizarre but it worked. Mutual respect for talent and a freaky kind of intuition allowed it to function in a near vacuum of social skills.

The gold leather smelled like heaven. Reverently, Adam put his arms into the jacket and felt calm return to his body. He zipped it up, walked over to the mirror on the wall and stared at himself. The memory of a dream where thousands of people chanted his name immediately surfaced. The sound filled his ears and a shower of camera flashes seemed to momentarily blind him. Gasping in sudden realization, Adam staggered back a few feet as if the weight of new knowledge were a physical blow.

“Is there a problem?”

Eyes still wider than wide, he turned to face Alex and whispered, “I’m going to be famous. I’m going to wear this jacket when I perform for a gigantic crowd…hundreds, thousands of people…”

“Hmph,” Alex responded, looking non-plussed. “I coulda told you that.”

But Adam wasn’t listening. Something mystical had just occurred, a bona fide vision or premonition, a certainty that his dreams would come to fruition, that he’d make it through his difficulties and survive and be a fucking rock star. OH.MY.GOD. Yanking his phone from his back pocket, he raced into the shop. “I’m going to be famous!” he yelled to Tommy as he punched Kris’ number.
Adam shot past the bewildered blond, out the door and onto the sidewalk. “Kris! Kris! Pick up pick up pick up! It’s lunchtime! It’s your break! Answer your phooonnee!” He shook the device as if this would make his lover’s voice say –

“Adam! I have to tell you--”

“Kris! Oh my god baby I’m gonna be famous and that means I’m going to keep getting better and I’ll be okay and I’ll have money on my own and we can move to fucking Paris!” He tried really hard to breathe normally.

“Then we’ll be famous together because I just got signed!”

“What? DUDE! Angel, that is so fucking awesome!” Adam did a little happy dance right in the middle of the busy sidewalk because he couldn’t not do one. “You so deserve that and you’re mega talented and we’re gonna be stars and eat caviar!”

“Ewww no! That stuff just has to be gross,” Kris laughed. “Now tell me what the hell is going on and then I’ll tell you about how much I kick ass.”

Adam started walking up and down the street, unable to stand still with all the excitement and adrenaline exploding inside him. People moved out of his way or didn’t and got bumped aside by his broad shoulders. “I had a vision! I mean a premonition or something and it was real! I’m gonna wear the jacket and everything and HOLY SHIT WE’LL BE MARRIED TOO!” Scenes of peacocks and glitter and adoring fans and touring and children and Kris and just his whole future rolled out in front of him and for the first time since his trauma, Adam truly felt that his life was destined to be good. He allowed Kris five seconds to squeal about being married before launching into the story of Alex and the jacket.

“Damn,” said Kris after listening intently to every word. “Damn, that’s just incredible, Adam! It’s like…you’re psychic or something…wow.”

“No I don’t think I am, I think it was just a clairvoyant moment where I was in tune with the universe or something and when I looked in the mirror and saw myself in the jacket--”

“The jacket! Adam, I had a dream that I was wearing it a while back!”

Adam’s mouth fell open. “You did? When? What happened?”

“I can’t remember,” said Kris, his voice sounding breathy and high pitched. “It was really weird. I just know I was wearing it even though it was yours and we were both on stage or something like that.”

“See!” Adam squeaked, “I told you we’re gonna be famous and oh my god what if we get to tour together and that’s why you’re on stage with me?”

“But that can’t be right…our styles are so different, there’s no way we’d be on the same tour, babe. There must be another reason or maybe I was just thinking about the jacket when I fell asleep.”

“Hmm, I dunno, I’m sure it means something…” He chewed on his bottom lip for a moment and then remembered about Kris’ news. “Oh! Tell me about getting signed!” Adam plopped down on a
bench and his knees bounced with happiness.

“Well you remember that girl who flirted with me on the first day? She’s in the journalism club at the school and she’s been helping to spread the word about my music around campus aaaand one of her online reviews got a ton of positive comments! I haven’t been paying attention but apparently there’s a growing buzz about me and the rep from Aware records noticed and made an offer!”

“Wow! I’m so--”

“And that’s who I was on the phone with when you called! I was on the other line and just hanging up!”

There was a pause, a sound like “GAH!” from Adam and then the two men spent the better part of ten minutes flailing and gushing until Alex came outside and demanded that Adam return to work. Reluctantly he said goodbye to Kris with many ‘I love yous’ and promises of hot kisses later that evening.

Adam put the jacket on the mannequin while he sewed sleeves onto a shirt, but when it was time to relieve Tommy for lunch he slipped it back on. Alex couldn’t complain; Adam was a walking advertisement for the man’s skill. People stared and made comments on its beauty perhaps not even realizing it was the same jacket that’d been in the shop window for ages. Armed with the knowledge that his determination would eventually pay off even if he fell on his face now and then, well, it seemed to act as a kind of shield made out of something very close to love. But it wasn’t like the love he had for Kris or Alisan or even his mom; it was the first inkling of an authentic love for himself. Adam only subconsciously recognized this but went about using the new shield quite effectively until Tommy returned from lunch.

“So full,” Tommy groaned, massaging his stomach as he took up his post behind the counter. “Taco stand has a new burrito, huge thing but so good.” He sighed and cast a glance at Adam. “You gonna tell me what all that famous stuff was about earlier and why are you wearing that jacket?”

“Alex is letting me borrow it for Ryan’s thing this weekend and well…I just have a good feeling about my future,” he replied, not sure he was ready to say anything more on the subject.

Tommy tried to look happy for Adam and managed it for a few seconds. “That’s really cool. You think you could lend me some of those good vibes?”

“I already told you how your future could be better…come play for me,” said Adam. Why won’t he just take the opportunity? Does he want to keep getting beat up? But Tommy gave him the ‘drop it’ face and Adam did. “Anyway are you coming to the club tomorrow night?”

“Yep, told Megan we’d meet up there but we can’t make it until about halfway through your set. Sorry, man.”

“It’s fine,” Adam told him as he made his way back to the workshop. “I’m just glad you’ll be there.”

“Wouldn’t miss a chance to hang with you.”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t sound so surprised,” Tommy chuckled. “We’re friends, aren’t we?”
A bright, beaming smile broke out on Adam’s face and it was a thing of beauty. “‘Course we are.”

***

It was pandemonium on Friday night. Adam had become so popular that there was barely room to move as people tried to elbow their way closer to the stage. Toes got stepped on, women pushed and shoved and all the gay pretty boys looked smug because they had dicks. Of course, everyone knew by now that Adam was deeply in love and no one stood a chance with him, but still the boys got flirty looks from Adam and that was enough to make them hard.

Adam fucking tore the place apart. Dressed in skin tight leather pants and a black sleeveless v-neck, he pretty much ditched his regular set and he sang everything from soulful acoustic numbers to rock your brains out to I’m gonna fuck you till you scream songs. There was a new fire in his heart tonight. I’m going to succeed, I will make it! The self confidence oozed everywhere, wafted through the air and it was fucking tantalizing, more attractive than the most wicked hip roll. The audience gobbled it up in huge mouthfuls and screamed for more. Adam caught sight of Kris and almost giggled at the way that crooked mouth was hanging open. I am so getting laid tonight.

Covered in sweat, glitter and a radiant smile, Adam ended the show with a special announcement. “Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for coming out tonight! You’re welcome to stop by my booth and say hi until eleven o’clock, but after that please allow me some privacy to be with my friends. And also, I’d appreciate it if you’d let me get to the table first,” he chuckled. “Thank you again!”

Adam was stunned to see that his plan worked and made it to the booth without too much difficulty. Why the hell didn’t I think of saying that before? He felt elated at his own brilliance and good about having told his friends not to protect him anymore. If I ever need a real bodyguard, I’ll hire one. He got within ten feet of the table when something warm and sexy flew at him and started attacking his mouth.

“Well…hello…mmmph…to you too…angel,” Adam said in between ravaging kisses. Their bodies, so familiar to each other, seemed to become one and they stood there making out until Alisan tugged on Adam’s sleeve.

“As much as I love a good porn flick, would you mind sitting down so we can order? I’m starving!” Heaving a sigh, Kris finally relented and stopped manhandling Adam. “You were so goddamn hot tonight!” he exclaimed as they sat down. “What got into you?”

“Seriously man,” said Tommy, “never seen anything like it…totally killed. Maybe…hmmm…”

He considering my offer, I just know it! Don’t push him though, let him come to it on his own. Adam looked around at Megan, Matt and Ali all nodding in agreement and blushed. “Thanks! I guess I’m just feeling more confident lately.”

Kris was latched to Adam’s side and kept squeezing his thigh. “So sexy,” he breathed into Adam’s ear. “Can’t wait to get you home.”

Adam shivered and was actually glad for the distractions of the fans because it kept him from fucking
Kris at the table. He did marginally well with all the attention, better than usual, but he still had to struggle with the feeling that his personal space was in constant danger of being violated. Girls, gays and older people were fine; it was the straights that unnerved him. *Just the ghost of bad memories, focus on their clothing like Alex taught you.* This was much more effective than trying to bully himself into relaxing.

“How excellent, tie,” he said to a young man about his age while signing a scrap of paper, “goes really well with the shirt.”

“How? Wow thanks, man. I’ll tell my girlfriend, she said it clashed.”

“Nah, it makes a nice statement and draws attention to your jawline. I bet she loves that part of you, by the way.”

“She totally does! Damn, you know your shit. What about these jeans?”

Adam looked up, handed the guy his autograph and studied the pants. “Hmmm, not bad, but next time try dark blue skinny jeans…you could totally get away with that.” He chuckled at the stammering “thank you” and felt his shoulders go down another inch or so. *Fashion is going to save my music career.*

At eleven o’clock Adam firmly laid down the law and his fans left him alone. Apparently self-confidence was the magic key, not to mention an aphrodisiac to one horny rabbit. All throughout their late meal of appetizers and drinks, Kris’ hands never left Adam. *Hmmm, maybe I’m the one getting fucked tonight.*

“So anyway,” Matt was saying, “did everyone hear about Kris’ awesome news? He got signed to a record label!”

There was a burst of excitement and whoops. “Congratulations!” cried Alisan, leaning over to give him a one armed hug. “Look out world! Kris Allen and Adam Lambert gonna shake you up!”

Under all the praise, Kris went bright red and even let go of Adam for a moment to accept a round of hugs from everyone else. “Ali, please make sure my album never goes on sale for five dollars at your store, okay?”

“Awww don’t you worry, honey, you’re record will kick ass…be right on the top hits shelf for a long time. You’ll be selling out venues and touring and…damn, you and Adam better get in a lot of loving before one or both you goes on the road.”

Adam gasped. “Don’t get ahead of yourself, Ali,” he said in a shaky voice, “that’s a long way away and…” But now that she’d said it, the thought of months without Kris was heartbreaking. He looked at his lover and saw the same pained expression reflected back at him.

“Oh shit, I’m sorry, puppy. Forget I said anything. Really, you’re right. Who know what’s going to happen?”

But it was too late. Everyone shifted awkwardly in their seats as Adam and Kris stared at each other. A horrible conflict crept into Adam’s chest, the desire to pursue his dreams and the need to be with Kris as much as humanly possible. Going on tour was part of being a successful performer. *What the fuck am I gonna do?*
Kris closed his eyes for a moment and then, rather abruptly, he nudged Adam right out of the booth. “Excuse us.”

“What are you doing?” Adam whispered.

“Come with me,” said Kris, grabbing him by the hand and hauling him away. The rugged angel said nothing until after he pushed Adam into a bathroom stall, locked it and pinned him to the door. “We can fucking handle this. Whatever comes our way, we’ll get through it, understand?”

Adam nodded, a little stunned at the growling man before him. *Hot though. Feisty.*

Kris licked Adam’s ear. “That’s right. It doesn’t matter what happens, even if we have to spend some time apart to support each other’s dreams. I belong to you and you…you belong to me.”

“Kris,” Adam moaned, suddenly and intensely turned on.

“Say you understand, say it.”

“I understand…shit…touch me, please baby.”

Kris put a hand to Adam’s hard shaft. “Say it like you mean it.”

*Holy fuck!* “I do mean it, I mean yes, I understand! We’ll be all right no matter what…I b-belong to you…”

“Good, that’s very good,” Kris hissed as he unzipped Adam’s fly. “Now turn around so I can prove that I’m right.”

Adam peeled his pants down in a goddamn hurry and did as he was told; spread his cheeks wide and waited to be filled. *Wild child Kris is the sexiest man on earth.* His arms were long enough that he could grip the top of the stall door and it was a fucking good thing because Kris was a raging bull. True, he made sure to properly prep Adam open with spit slick fingers and tongue, but he was ruthless about it, licking and finger fucking and making Adam rattle the door before even being penetrated.

The hinges squeaked and the lock bounced in its latch. Blue flecks of paint gathered under Adam’s fingernails. A line of precum stretched from his cock to the tile floor, and Kris spanked him twice before fucking him senseless.

Twenty minutes later the stall door opened and very disheveled Adam came staggering out wearing a dopey smile. “Dude,” he said to a wide-eyed man taking a piss, “my fiancé is one spectacular fuck. You don’t even know how lucky I am.” Kris walked out zipping up his jeans and looking very pleased with himself. Random guy gawped at him and licked his lips.

Kris winked. “Come on lover,” he said, taking Adam by the hand again, “let’s go get wasted.”

***

“And then,” Tommy cackled, “I told Matt that his little tree looked like bush, but not a plant bush…
you know like,” he nodded at Alisan and Megan, “like bush!”

Everyone hooted with laughter except Alisan, who frowned. “It’s a Bonsai tree!” she scowled at Tommy, then punched Matt in the arm. “Tell him, Matt.”

“She’s right,” he snorted after taking yet another sip of booze, “it’s a bonzi tree.”

“Bonsai, not bonzi!”

Adam slopped a glass of vodka down his front and banged on the table. “Aaahahahaaaaa…bush! Get it Krissssy, bushhhhh like pubic haaiirr!” He coughed a few times, fell over into Kris’ lap and giggled while Kris wiped tears of mirth from his own eyes.

“Well I don’t even have bonzi bush,” Megan babbled, just a hint past tipsy, “I’m like a smooth desert down there!”

“Ewww Megs, a desert? Noooooo, thos’r too dryy ‘n you don look dry,” said Kris. “Right Tommy, shees not is she?”

“Oh my god you guys,” Alisan chortled, you really do lose your filter when you get drunk.” While Kris and Adam were totally gone and Matt and Megan just buzzed, she and Tommy were the only sober ones of the group.

Tommy laughed so hard at Kris’ comment that he couldn’t even respond, not that it mattered since Kris had already moved on to pointing out how all the lights in the room were really clusters of enslaved fireflies.

After making a valiant attempt to dance and failing, the couple agreed to let Alisan drive them home. “Byyeee Tommmmy and Mattyyyy and Meggyyyyy,” Adam called as Ali shoved him into the backseat. He faceplanted into Kris’ chest and at once they began a sloppy, flaily makeout session.

No one saw Brian standing way off to the side, weeping silently and gazing with longing at the happy scene. He was alone, friendless and still obsessing over Kris. He watched the group part ways before walking off into the night. Adam wouldn’t see him again for long time.

***

“Krissyyyy!” Adam stumbled to the kitchen when they got home and pulled a tub of ice cream from the freezer. “Looook!”

“Ooooh, greeeeen ice creeeeeem! Hey tha rhymes!”

Fifi danced around their ankles, which was quite the dangerous thing to do while her owners were toasted. Adam nearly tripped over her trying to get to the couch with the ice cream and two cooking spoons. “Fiifiii noooooo, ahhhh help me!” The spoons went flying but fortunately landed on the sofa, and Adam just managed to keep himself upright without dropping the carton. When the drunken lovers were settled, they dug in to the mint chocolate chip goodness in a fantastically messy manner.

“Why I gotta wood spoon?” Kris giggled as he licked the utensil.
“I dunno. Hey lookit mine!” Adam’s spoon turned out to be a ladle.

They started kissing with sticky mouths in between ridiculously enormous bites and soon the ice cream carton was empty. “Yummmm.” Adam let out a loud belch and the boys lost it. Cackling, they fell onto the floor and rolled around, Fifi yipping and trying to join in the fun. Adam tried to give Kris a blow job but it just didn’t happen and he passed out with his mouth half full of cock.

It was a very good thing that the media event was scheduled for Saturday evening because Adam woke up around eleven o’clock. He was a hot mess; his hair all glued in clumps with ice cream gel and his face an abstract painting of green sugar. Kris looked equally bad, but he was so adorable just lying there with his pants around his ankles that Adam couldn’t help but snuggle back up to him despite needing a shower and 5 bottles of Tylenol in the worst way.

Dingalingaling! Fucking bell. Must get rid of it, strangle it to death.

Kris groaned. “Wha…”

Instead of getting up, Adam just rolled across the carpet, deftly unlocked the sliding door with his foot and let Fifi outside. “Ha, take that, stupid bell.” He rolled back over to Kris and they fell asleep for another hour and a half.

He woke up to Kris licking his jaw. “You’re tasty.”

Adam giggled. “I’m sticky, and so are you lover. We need a shower, like a two hour shower.”

“Good plan, and maybe you can finish what you started last night,” said Kris, pointing to his morning wood and smirking.

“Mmm, don’t mind if I do.”

After making Kris come in the shower…twice, Adam spent the rest of the afternoon alternately staring at the jacket and pacing. “There’ll be lots of cameras. It’s a press conference thing for American Idol…tons of people taking pictures, asking questions…”

“But they won’t be asking you,” said Kris as he wolfed down sandwich number two. “Everyone will be focused on Ryan and Simon and the others, right?”

“Yeah…yeah.” Stop worrying, I can handle this. Is that so? Can you, Lambert? Can you really handle a crowd like that? What if they start getting all up in your business? I’ll do fine. I’m a fashion consultant…I’ll talk about fashion. Besides, it’s my destiny to be in the spotlight. The cruel voice in his head snorted derisively. Oh fuck off.

“Adam?”

“Hmmm?”

“Come and have some lunch. You haven’t eaten a thing. I even chopped up celery for the tuna salad, just the way you like it.”

Adam smiled at Kris and joined him at the table. “Thanks babe, it’s really good.” But he felt like he was chewing cardboard instead of the perfect tuna salad. It’s my destiny…my destiny. Everything will work out. I have the jacket.
Adam put on his best no-worry face as he got ready for the event. It took him two hours before he felt like his hair, makeup, accessories and clothing matched the jacket. While he didn’t want to draw too much attention to himself, the leather garment would undoubtedly make a statement and he needed to be up for photos. He went with skin tight black pants that flared from the shin, a studded belt and a black shirt that flattered his midsection.

When he was finally done, he took a step back and examined his reflection in the mirror. Every strand was in place, every freckle concealed.

“Wow, you look like a movie star,” Kris breathed in awe from the bathroom doorway. He walked up behind Adam and carefully embraced him, making sure not to disturb his hair. “You’re gonna be amazing.”

“I’m gonna be amazing,” Adam repeated.

“You were born to be a star.”

“I was born to be a star.” Adam tried out a camera smile. Not bad. “Okay, the car is coming to pick me up in twenty minutes. I’m ready.”

“Good,” said Kris, “so you have plenty of time to give me a very thorough goodbye kiss and still reapply your lip gloss.”

Adam just chuckled as he allowed Kris to suck on his lower lip before initiating their farewell.

* 

“You look good, better than me,” Ryan told Adam once they’d met up a mile from the venue.

He didn’t sound too pleased at this. Adam tried to play it off. “Nah, that’s just Alex’s jacket. It fools people into thinking that anyone wearing it is gorgeous. Really I’m a troll dressed up like a diva,” he joked.

“Yeah alright, well anyway, did I do okay? I want to look better than Simon.”

Adam surveyed the fussy man, dressed in the outfit he’d styled for him. The black slacks that hugged his thighs also made him look taller and the shirt – unconventional for Ryan’s usual garb – was a shocking bright orange. Add to that a skinny black tie and a blazer, and even Adam thought he looked hot. Somehow the orange really worked on him. “Excellent, you look really good and thank you for ditching that horrible watch. This one is much better.”

Ryan fidgeted with the new, less bulky watch. “Okay, and are you sure these boots aren’t too… heeled?”

“No way,” Adam assured him. “You look like a very confident, fashionable straight guy.”

“Fine, let’s go then.”

They got into Ryan’s limo and were driven the short distance to the press conference where the hosts
and producers would reveal the new voting format for American Idol. Oh shit. Adam saw the mass
of journalists from blocks away and immediately wanted out. I was born to be in the spotlight…no
one is going to touch me or harass me…I was born to be…fuck.

Ryan noticed nothing; he was too busy checking his reflection in the tinted window. “Let me get
first and wait for about a minute before joining me,” he said as he adjusted his tie.

“Yeah, okay.”

The limo stopped and Ryan exited to shouts and the flashes of cameras. Adam kept well back and
waited, attempting not to pick at his freshly painted nails. One, two, three… He counted to sixty
before opening the door.

“And who’s this, Ryan?” Click click click!

A burst of lights blew up in Adam’s face. He tried desperately to smile in the face of it all and not fall
over. I can’t fucking see!

“This is Adam Lambert, my new fashion consultant.”

“Wow, where on earth did you find him?” “Look at that jacket!” “Ryan, did he pick out that
amazing outfit you’re wearing today? “Adam, are you an independent? Who do you work for?”

Adam’s heart raced as the questions fired and the cameras continued to flash. He felt his hands start
to shake. Get it together, Lambert! This is your arena! “Yes, I did help Ryan with his special look
today. I work for Sew Your Soul and this jacket is one of Alex’s creations.”

“Seacrest! My god man, what on earth are you dressed in?”

It was Simon Cowell garbed in his usual jeans, white t-shirt and blazer. So intensely boring. If
anyone needs my help it’s him.

“Hey Simon, maybe you should hire Ryan’s fashion consultant,” jeered one of the journalists, and
the others laughed. “Yeah, that look is getting kind of old, don’t you think?”

“Oh piss off,” said the Brit. “Orange, Seacrest, really?” The man glanced at Adam. “I suppose this is
your doing, is it?”

For some reason, this dude was anything but intimidating to Adam. He nodded curtly and said,
“absolutely, and you might want to think of contacting my boss for a little update in the wardrobe
department.”

Simon flushed, but seemed impressed by Adam’s spunk.

“Oh my god!” squealed a woman’s voice, “Ryan! You look stunning!”

“Why thank you Paula…and Randy, how are you,” added Ryan as another man joined them.

“‘Sup dog? Nice jacket, man.”

Adam thanked him and stared at Paula Abdul. He was trying to get up the nerve to talk to her when
someone yanked hard on his arm. At once he drew back and clenched his fists. Don’t panic! It’s
nothing! Just someone getting your attention. Chill, Adam.

“Sweetheart, I think you want to come with me,” said the young man holding onto him, “all the other assistants are over here...step out of the limelight, okay?” he whispered quickly.

Blood was still pounding in Adam’s ears, urging the fight or flight response to kick in and god he wanted to listen, wanted to punch something or take off in fucking hurry. Why isn’t the jacket helping? This is my destiny...I’m confident...I’m confident! But it wasn’t a magic fix after all. It was just a pretty piece of leather. You’re nothing, Lambert! Still as weak and pathetic as you ever were! Did you think you were special? Think you could handle this? No, stop! Stop!

“Sweetheart, did you hear me?”

“Please...stop...”

“Stop what, honey, I’m just trying to--”

Adam shook his head and his vision cleared a little. “Please, stop touching me.”

“Ohhh, my bad! You’ve got a bubble, don’t you? Well it’s no problem honey, just come along now alright?”

“Jared, leave Adam alone,” said Ryan. “He can stay. I need him to defend my color choices,” he laughed. “Let’s go,” he motioned to Adam, “the press conference is about to start.”

_Breathe, just fucking breathe!_ With a massive effort Adam started to walk forward, forcing his fists to unclench and his teeth to stop grinding. Jared looked extremely put out but Adam didn’t care. He needed to focus. He needed to remember how he’d felt the other day in Sew Your Soul. _I’m going to be famous, I’m going to be able to handle all of this! Everything...the cameras and questions and random people pulling at me. Fuck, why can’t that day be now?_

Old patterns of thought swirled but Adam fought them as he entered the building, duking it out with stupid and irrational and inaccurate beliefs that clawed at this brain trying to convince him they were right. _Just as weak as you were the day Sam raped you, Lambert._ “Fuck!” Adam came to a dead halt in the middle of the sidewalk. He was losing the battle but it wasn’t a flashback that hit him, it was the sadness.

“What’s up?”

“Ryan, um I really need to use the restroom, can you point he way?”

“Sure thing, but hurry up alright?”

Adam nodded and quickly dashed in the direction Ryan had indicated. He made it to a stall just in time. Head hanging straight over the toilet so the tears wouldn’t ruin his makeup, Adam sobbed out a little of the pain tearing at his heart. _Just go with it and it’ll be over faster._ That was Sheila’s voice, and he’d trained himself to listen to it. Inky black mascara tears plopped into the blue toilet water and his glossy lips opened and closed in silent cries.

But in five minutes he was done. “Goodbye,” he said to the sadness being flushed away.
“Adam, you’re just in time!” Ryan called to him when he’d entered the main room. The man ushered him to a seat in the front row near the journalists before taking his place at the table. “Don’t forget to speak up if I look at you for fashion help, okay?”

“Not a problem,” said Adam, sitting down. Alright, so nothing is magic, not even a magic jacket. Fine.

The press conference started with the producer making a statement about the new rules of American Idol, where voting would be limited to one call per phone number. Adam thought it was pretty fair. That’s how he’d want it if he were ever on the show. Things started to get boring after that, discussion about the technology and how they’d track phone numbers. Adam took the time to do a quick self-assessment and found that he was…stable. Good enough.

Once the serious business was over, the journalists started to banter with the stars. “So Paula, hear you’ve got a new album coming out.” “Simon, how come you’re such a hard ass on the show?” And then finally, “Ryan, tell us about your new style. Will you be appearing on American Idol dressed like that?”

“Well I’m hoping that Adam can keep things fresh for me,” he said, “and I have no doubt that he’s up to the challenge.”

“Just be careful he doesn’t take your place with those dark good looks!”

Several guffaws broke out and Adam smiled politely.

“Aren’t you worried that what you wear each week will start gossip and speculation?”

Ryan snorted. “I sure hope it will. Might kill the rumors that Simon and I are having a secret love affair.”

More laughter and this time Adam joined in. He could totally be gay though.

“What will you dress Ryan in next time, Adam?”

All heads suddenly turned to him and he fucking handled it. “Hmm, well I’ve been thinking that he should get a tattoo. I’m kidding!” he added when Ryan gasped. “No really, I’m not sure. When we go shopping I just let inspiration guide me. Guess you’ll have to tune in to see.”

That got the thumbs up from all of the stars and the producer to boot.

After it was all over, there were more pictures, more questions and more people trying to get into Adam’s space. They wanted to know if he was available for hire to other stars, if he’d gone to fashion school and if he’d be attending the tapings of American Idol. Adam did the best he could but he was desperate to get the fuck away. It was exhausting. Every nerve was on edge just waiting to be pushed too far.

At last Ryan said it was time to leave and gestured to the car that had picked Adam up at home. Adam gave a last fake smile and all but leapt into the vehicle. “Call you next week,” he said to Ryan.
before closing the door. He sat with his head in his hands the entire drive home, feeling rather numb.

The instant he walked into his apartment he stated, “I want a bath, I want ice cream, and I want cuddling.” And that’s exactly what happened. Without a word Kris filled the tub, got a new carton of ice cream from the freezer and settled down with Adam in the hot, soothing water. Adam didn’t speak for nearly ten minutes, just let Kris spoon feed him sweet cream as they soaked and relaxed.

“I cried in the bathroom,” he said when his muscles felt softer than cement. “I was anxious and panicky. But I did it. All on my own. It wasn’t the jacket, it was me.” He sank down even lower into Kris’ warm arms. “It’s always been me, hasn’t it?”

“Yes, it’s always been you,” said Kris with a tender kiss to his temple. “You’re responsible for the success that’s coming your way.”

“It’s me. I’m the magic, Kris. I’m the magic.”

***

Exactly a week later, Adam Lambert used all of his magic to propose to Kris. It was time. With his heart in his throat he walked around the bedroom and lit twenty candles, then waited for Kris to come home.

“Adam? Matt said to say hi to you. Where are you, baby?”

“In the bedroom,” he replied, trying not to giggle with nerves. Even though they were already engaged, this would finalize it in Adam’s mind. He pressed his black and gold ring to his cheek.

“Hey, what are you…oh…holy…” Kris dropped his guitar case and brought his hands to his mouth. “Adam…oh my god.” Tears were already sparkling in his brown eyes.

“Shhh. Just come here, angel.” Adam moved forward. He was completely nude save for his angel bracelet. Gently, Adam took Kris’ hands and led him toward the bed. There, surrounded by flickering candles on every surface, he undressed his lover with painstaking care. “Close your eyes,” whispered Adam, and when Kris’ watery orbs were hidden Adam went to the closet and brought out his Grandfather’s box and the framed Tie that he’d taken down earlier. He set them on the floor, kneeled and told Kris to open his eyes. “Kristopher Neil Allen…angel…rabbit…”

“Adam,” Kris whispered in a choked voice.

“My angel, I didn’t realize how lonely I was until I met you. I didn’t know that my heart was capable of so much love until the day I took you into my bed. I never imagined that I would be worthy…” Adam swallowed hard before continuing. “…that I would be worthy of someone like you.” He opened the box and removed the music note pendant, then put it around his own neck. Something shifted in that moment, a recognition by the universe that Adam loved himself a little more today. “We were meant to be together, lover. Be mine. Marry me and raise children with me and grow old with me.” He held out the ring. Kris’ tears shone in the candlelight as Adam slipped the silver band on his finger. Two wolves were carved into the ring so that their heads met in the middle, touching… nudging. “Be my wolf, be my partner.”
“Y-yes, I will be your wolf, your partner, and we’ll grow old and and…” Kris started to cry in earnest.

“Then hold this with me,” breathed Adam, his eyes glittering with a fierce devotion. The two lovers grasped the framed Tie between them for several long moments, each remembering how it had brought them together over a year ago. Adam thought of all the fear and pain he’d endured to find love and knew that it was worth it a thousand times over. Kris’ heart swelled full to bursting with the knowledge that his own bravery had led him to this moment.

At some point, it didn’t matter when, Adam and Kris put down the Tie and climbed into bed together. They shared sweet kisses and tender words full of commitment. There was no hurry. Soft skin and bodies connected, moved and loved like they had forever. Which they did.

In the pause before Adam entered Kris, he whispered, “I still have a long way to go.”

“Me too…but we’ll get there together.”

And that was also the magic.

***

A beautiful angel was flying, high above the tree tops. His long wings skimmed clouds and his toes flexed in the freedom. “Look at mee! I’m flying!” Black hair fluttered in the wind, and the other angel giggled as he watched from a nearby branch.

“Bet you can go higher!”

“Bet I can, too!”

-END-

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