

LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

AWAKENINGS

Jayson James

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

AWAKENINGS

By Jayson James

Introduction

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

What Is Love's Landscapes?

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

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

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

Words of Caution

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

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

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Photo Description

The photo is of a muscular guy in his early 20's with smooth tan skin and dark brown hair that is combed back to spike up. He is standing behind a vacuum cleaner in a pair of blue boxer briefs with a grin on his face in what appears to be a bedroom and the picture seems to be candid.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

I'd always considered myself sort of asexual up until now. In high school no one interested me and I was too busy with schoolwork to date anyway. I figured I didn't have a big sex drive or I just hadn't met the right girl. However, the more time I spend with my roommate, Ben, the more I'm reconsidering everything.

The more he walks around half dressed the more I keep noticing him. Even if I am attracted to him, which I'm not sure that I am, I don't think he would be into me. He seems like the type of guy that girls flock to. He couldn't be interested in me, could he?

Requests: Clearly I'm angling for a gay-for-you here, folks! It can be a double or single GFY, lots of sexual tension (please!), slow build romance, lots of heat. I would rather no BDSM but some light stuff wouldn't bother me.

Sincerely,

Story Info

Genre: new adult, contemporary

Tags: college, masturbation, first time, coming of age, gay for you

Word Count: 17,448

Acknowledgement

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AWAKENINGS

By Jayson James

Winter break from school had been nice. Just enough time to catch up with family and friends, but still ending before boredom could set in. Since it was expensive to fly me home and back, my parents wanted me to come home as soon as possible and go back late. This was fine by me. In actuality, I was feeling slightly homesick by the end of the fall quarter and looked forward to the visit. What I had not thought about, prior to agreeing to this arrangement, was registering for my winter classes.

Apparently, I was not the only freshman student to have forgotten about it either. The registration office was lined up out the door with students in the same situation as me, hoping they would be able to get into the classes they wanted to take this quarter. Two hours later I emerged, tired of carrying a bag that felt as if I were carrying a ton of bricks, but in reality was gifts and assorted items I'd wanted to take back to campus with me.

In my boredom, while waiting in line, I'd been sending text messages to various people to occupy the time. One of them was my roommate Ben who immediately replied, "That bitch Melody and I are no more. I broke up with her before leaving. Nice present, huh?" This made me laugh out loud. Melody had been Ben's girlfriend since they met at a campus Halloween party. I'd let it slip one night that I thought she was a bitch, and Ben, rather than getting mad, basically agreed with me, saying, "I can see why you would think that." For several weeks I wondered why Ben had not broken up with her, since all I could see that she'd brought to his life was drama.

My arm was too sore to hold my bag any longer, even if it was to pick it up and move it along. Ben had offered to come and grab it from me early on in the conversation. I was feeling optimistic that it would not take me long to register and told him I would be fine. By the time both of my arms were sore from picking it up and moving forward a couple of feet, I was ready to take him up on the offer, but I felt a little humiliated at the idea of having him come grab it when I saw plenty of other people doing fine with their own bags. Instead, I started scooting the bag along, shoving it with my foot and in the process scuffing it up.

When I returned to our dorm room, Ben was lying on his made-up bed, wearing only a pair of black boxer briefs and black low cut socks, reading a book. The socks were an addition to what Ben typically wore around our room. I figured he must be cold. I was irritated and tossed my bag down on my bed, thinking I was too tired to unpack it right now.

Ben put down his book beside him. "Hey, Solo!"

"Hi, Ben." I responded. Solo was the name Ben had given me at the beginning of the year, when we moved in together. It used to bug me, however over break I discovered I disliked Soli, what my friends called me, more. My family, teachers, doctors and such were the only ones to call me by my given name, Solomon. Solomon J. Anderson, from Ravenswood, a small town in northern California.

"You okay?" Ben snapped me out of my own head.

"Yeah, just tired. I cannot believe how long it took to get my classes." I noted that the position he was lying in, on his side, made him look like an underwear model. This might seem odd to you, this reference, but I have always been one to appreciate the beauty of either sex.

He rubbed his hand up and down his chest as he talked. "Did you get the classes you wanted?"

"Surprisingly, yes." I pulled my schedule out of my pocket and held it out to him.

He sat up, grabbing his own off his nightstand, handing it to me as he took mine. "That's good! You should have come back yesterday. There was hardly anybody down there."

"Figures." I took his schedule and looked it over, starting at the top with his name, which I thought was much cooler than my own, Benjamin A. Pratt. He was from Seattle and decided to stay in Washington State for college. Myself, I decided on Western Washington University because they awarded me a scholarship before any other school had.

"I had Altrez last quarter. You are welcome to use my notes and papers from her class. Unfortunately, I sold my books." Then he offered up, "I got a B+ from her."

"Cool! Thanks!"

We made some more small talk about our schedules, each of us sitting and eventually lying on our own beds. My bag was occupying space on my bed and

I knew I was going to have to unpack it eventually. For at least the next seventy-two hours, I had no studying to do, classes to attend, laundry to catch up on or anything else that occupied any and all free time I had during the quarter. It felt nice to just sit and be.

Ben got up out of bed, unkinked his neck and stretched out his arms, pushing his package out into plain view in the process. As if this was not enough, he let out an exaggerated yawn. I thought he might be doing this to draw my attention. However, he did not appear to look at me.

Ben was not the least bit self-conscious. If anything, he was over confident. He spent most of his time in our room in various states of undress. The first time we met, within minutes Ben had taken his shirt off stating, "I'm hot! Don't you think?"

"You bet!" I responded without thinking, and a feeling of concern came over me that he'd take me the wrong way.

He winked at me and smiled back. "The feeling's mutual."

This had had us both laughing. Though others may not always get us, we shared a warped sense of humor. It was one of many ways, we would soon discover that we were alike. There was this magnetism about Ben, where I immediately felt at ease around him, as if I'd known him my whole life. When I brought it up to him later, when I was in one of my sentimental moods, he agreed he felt the same about me. We connected and got along instantaneously. I'd had friends before, but they never seemed to get me as Ben did.

Over the next couple of days, Ben confessed to me that he was proud of his body and kind of got off on people checking him out. For me, it did not matter much either way if he was clothed or not.

"I think I am going to take a shower," Ben grinned and jacked a fist in front of his crotch. "After I work this out, I am thinking about taking a nap."

"A nap sounds like a good idea." I didn't feel like moving. It was an effort to kick off my shoes.

Ben pulled on a pair of shorts. While he put on his T-shirt, he slid his feet into some flip-flops. "You want to go out and get something to eat?"

I was confused. "I thought you were going to take a nap?"

"I'm going to jerk off in the shower first," he reiterated in case I was not able to figure out his gesture. He was in the process of gathering his towel and other items he would need, when he held out this bottle. "This stuff feels so

good. I get good and clean and, man, it feels so good! You are welcome to try it if you want.”

“I’m going to take a nap.” I considered his suggestion, surprised that I was slightly curious about what he was talking about. “I’ll go with you in a couple of hours though.”

“Sounds like a plan.” He gathered his stuff. “If you change your mind, you know where you can find me.” Although he made comments like this all the time, I was still unsure how to take them. I gave him a funny look. He said, “I’m tired. I’ll be back in a bit, Solo.” He was out of the room with the door closed behind him before I could respond.

I smiled and thought to myself that I was glad to have Ben in my life. It was good to be back at school with him. As I drifted off to sleep, my mind wandered to a few weeks into school. I had found myself feeling sad and alone. By the time Ben had come back to our room, I had my knees pulled up to my chin and my arms holding tightly onto my legs. I was breathing deeply, trying not to cry, which became extremely difficult when Ben entered the room.

He did not even ask me what was wrong. He came over, sat down beside me on my bed, and put an arm around me. Neither of us spoke. Ben let me cry and I even think that he cried a bit himself, although I was not completely sure. We were both homesick. Sure, I still missed home, yet now I knew that I was not alone.

Ben and I decided to leave campus to get some pizza. It was not all that often we left campus for a meal. We either ate at the cafeteria or creatively prepared something in our room. Ben insisted on treating me, after spending a majority of the time, we’d been back in our room watching movies on the flat screen television and Blu-ray player he’d gotten for Christmas. He appeared happier than I was to see the hot water pot I’d gotten. This meant no more guessing how long to cook our Cup Noodles, one of our mainstay meals, in the microwave. We were also able to make coffee and cocoa (and tea, only because it was in the basket that came with the pot).

We had everything we needed to stay shut in, avoiding the freezing temperatures outside. I joined Ben in hanging out in our room in my underwear, although I wore a T-shirt and boxers, which covered my body better. He commented on being cold himself, which prompted him to put on a shirt and even a sweatshirt. I could not resist remarking on this after he put on the sweatshirt. “Look at that! Benji can dress himself now!”

“Pretty cool, huh?” We were watching our third or fourth movie. He took his attention away from the television screen. “Benji, Solo? Is that what you are going to call me now?”

I thought about it briefly. “Only if you want it to be. I like Ben better.” I felt cold, so I rubbed my hands on my arms and thought about putting on a sweatshirt myself.

“As do I. I suppose if you want to give me a little pet name, like when we are alone, that would be fine by me.” Ben pulled his sweatshirt off. “Now I’m cooking.” He tossed it over to me. “Here you look like you need it.”

“Thanks!” I caught it and put it on. It smelled like Ben, a good smell, and I felt all warm and fuzzy. “A little pet name?”

It was then that Ben suggested going out for pizza. It sounded good, but I was reluctant to spend the money. Although, between Christmas and the scholarship money, I didn’t have to count every penny. I wanted to go though, because I rarely treated myself.

Before I could agree, Ben was insisting, “My treat!”

“You don’t have to buy.”

“I want to.” He smiled. “Let me treat you!”

It was that smile. Sure, I’d seen it before, with his bright white, perfectly aligned teeth. Ben was smiling all the time. Now that I was really taking notice of it, I felt myself charmed by it. As he talked about where we would go and what kind of pizza we would get, I was entranced with his every word.

“You game?” Ben asked.

I snapped out of my trance. “Sounds great!”

Although it was raining, the temperature was warmer outside than it had been the previous days. I do not know what it is, but for some reason guys in Washington do not use umbrellas in the rain. Ben told me to keep his sweatshirt on and suggested I put on my coat over it. Two blocks away from campus, I was glad I’d taken his advice.

Ben and I walked quickly and chitchatted the whole way. Our focus was on what other movies we wanted to watch and the books we’d read while we were off. It made me happy to hear that he’d read the one book I’d hoped that he would have. A car drove past with its windows opened part way and the stereo blasting a song. We started singing it to amuse ourselves for the remainder of the walk.

The pizza place was crowded. Ben pointed out a booth. "You go grab us a place to sit and I'll go order."

I agreed and made my way over to the only open place for us to sit. I was glad we did not have to sit at a table. A lady stopped in front of the booth when I was a few feet away and I thought about telling her it was taken by me. To my relief she was only grabbing the Parmesan cheese container to sprinkle some on her slices of pizza. I sat down, looking around the pizzeria, occasionally seeing how far Ben had gotten in the line. As I waited, I found myself reflecting on life back home.

In my family, I am the younger of the middle two kids out of four altogether. My parents had a boy, then a girl, another boy (me) and another girl, with each of us spaced roughly two years apart, each of us born on even numbered months. What can I say; my parents have a thing for even numbers. We were not poor, but the reality was my parents could not afford to send any of us to college. This meant that if we wanted to go, we needed to find a way to pay for it. My older brother worked and went to school, while my older sister got a softball scholarship. For me, sports never interested me at all, so I kept my grades up, which paid off in the form of an academic scholarship.

My older siblings and I were watching a movie, back when I was in middle school. One of the characters commented, "That's you, odd as a cod." That phrase stuck with me. The reason being that it echoed how I felt, odd. Unlike everybody else my age, male or female, who all seemed consumed with sex, sex was not that big of a deal for me. Sure I could appreciate qualities and traits of an individual, but nothing ever, well, got me all that worked up. My sexual desires seemed mild compared to those of my peers. Initially I chalked this up to being a late bloomer.

I was not concerned about my lack of interest in sex until one day some friends of mine were talking to me about how often they jerked off. For the most part, they claimed to do it twice a day or more every day. I pretended that it was the same for me. The truth was I never much felt like it. In my desire to not be different, I made an effort a few times a day. Sure, if I touched myself, I would get hard. That was the easy part.

Then there were one of two outcomes, I would rub myself raw without "getting there" or I would become flaccid. My brother had dirty magazines he did not know I knew about. One had people in various sexual positions, and this material helped. However, it felt more like an obligation and I eventually

concluded that only I knew the real number of times I got off. I would repeat things my buddies would say and I was no longer concerned about my lack of sexual desire.

My friends were all into dating girls, so there was always pressure from them to date this girl or that girl. Then there were the girls that would literally throw themselves at me. None of them interested me in the least. I figured it was because I had never found the right girl.

Achieving good grades was at the forefront of my mind. My guidance counselor helped me with applying for academic scholarships, frequently reiterating that I would need to keep my grades up in order to be awarded one. Going to college was important to me. I always liked school and the idea of it continuing past high school was fine by me.

In the small town of Ravenswood, California, where I grew up, men only fell in love with women, and if you were not dating then people automatically assumed you were gay. I knew well enough that I did not want people to assume that I was gay, but the problem was that there were no girls who interested me.

I love dancing and music. This prompted me to attend the occasional dance. Part of this routine was asking a girl to go with me. I would make it clear we were going only as friends. Nevertheless, each girl I asked was thrilled to go along with me. At the dance, the majority of the time everyone danced together and hung out. There was no pressure. It was enough to keep anyone from talking behind my back or questioning me. I quickly learned that if a girl went with me twice, I should give her a hug when I thanked her.

One time when I'd gone with a group, I even gave the girl a kiss on the lips. It was nothing big to me. The pat on the back and being acclaimed and envied by my friends was a bigger pleasure. It was simply what I did to avoid scrutiny. I believed that everyone put on an act at some time or another, such as the way you talk with your friends is never the way you talk with your mother.

I was happy. Or at least I thought I was. Going home and coming back, something occurred to me. Had I been living a lie? I pushed the thought from my head as Ben walked up carrying a tray with a pitcher of soda, glasses and plates.

During our return to campus the rain was coming down heavier than when we'd left. Ben and I ran most of the way, stopping now and then under covered

areas to catch our breath and shake water off us. By the time we reached the dorm, Ben's sweatshirt, which I was wearing under my zipped up coat, was completely saturated.

In our room, we both stripped off our wet clothes, throwing them in the middle of the floor. My teeth were chattering as I was down to my boxers that were also soaked. Ben was down to his blue boxer briefs, which were also wet. He grabbed a blanket off the end of his bed, opened it up around himself and walked towards me.

I cringed as he wrapped his blanketed arms around me. "This should heat us up." I'd never been this close to somebody wearing so little. The warmth felt good as I was shivering. Ben pulled me close to him, his cold body pressed against mine. "We need to get warm."

Ben stopped shivering immediately. As I stood there with Ben's arms wrapped around me beneath the blanket, I felt myself warm up from the inside, warmth working outward. He kept his arms around me. My eyes roamed around our room, as I wondered if anyone who saw us would think this was strange. I was glad to no longer be freezing. When I looked at Ben, his eyes were closed and he appeared to be content. Appreciating the warmth, I remained beside him.

Shifting my legs, I moved my hand and accidentally brushed it across the front of Ben's wet boxer briefs. Ben tensed up slightly. I nervously tensed myself. "Sorry about that."

"No worries."

I was relieved. I moved again and I could not believe it when I brushed my hand against him again, definitely feeling his penis this time. "Shit! I swear that was an accident."

"Sure!" Ben smiled. He brushed his hand against my own penis. "Now we're even."

I shrugged indifferently. It made sense to me. Yet, Ben was looking at me intently. I stared back at him briefly, unsure why he was looking at me as he was. "What?"

He smiled at me and rubbed his crotch on me. I moved my hand out of the way, in order not to touch him again. His penis bumped mine. I was not sure what he was doing. He must have read the confusion on my face. "I guess the close proximity has me worked up."

“I get it.” The thing was I did not. I was warm and didn’t mind being next to him, it was different, but I was indifferent.

Ben took one of his hands and ran it down my back. It made me shake. “That tickles.” I pulled back. “I’m good now.” He pulled the blanket around, covering himself. I grabbed my robe and put it on. “I’m going to take a warm shower.”

“Okay.” He sat down on his bed. As I gathered up my clothes and shower stuff, he sat and watched me.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him grabbing his crotch. “You should put on some dry underwear.”

“I will.” He pulled off his underwear beneath the blanket and kicked them over to the pile of our wet clothes.

He was giving me that funny look again when I left the room. I shrugged it off. Maybe it was all in my head I thought. By the time I was in the shower, Ben was out of my head.

It was most unusual to find Ben wearing anything more than his boxer briefs. A majority of the time he was in our room, and then sometimes he would walk down the hall with nothing but them on. He’d been told that he could not walk around naked, which the university considered included being in his underwear. This did not stop him from walking to the end of the hall or going to the showers in nothing but his underwear. I even knew of one time he walked downstairs to get the mail.

Most of the time, Ben spent his time half dressed. He would wear shorts or pants for a bit. This would not last though. He never seemed uncomfortable in his clothes, which consisted of short sleeve shirts and jeans. When he was home though, the shirt would come off within minutes. The pants he would keep on for a little while longer. I knew that he was going to be this way, because when we moved in together, he warned me about it.

Ben did not care if anyone checked him out. He knew he was attractive, but was not vain about it. He’d noted to me a few times that there were quite a few girls and a couple of guys that “enjoyed the view” as he put it.

I’d never thought anything of it. That was, until the day before classes started up again and we’d decided to clean up the garbage we’d accumulated in our room for a fresh start to the quarter. Ben had agreed to vacuum the room, if

I ran the trash bags out. I was glad to, because I hated the sound of the vacuum cleaner as well as vacuuming.

Coming back from taking the garbage out, I was distracted with the book exchange table briefly, more so that I would miss the sound of the vacuum cleaner being used than any interest in finding a book.

Ben had finished up and was standing still behind the vacuum cleaner grinning proudly. I was confused until the flash blinded me. "What are you doing? Creating an advertisement for naked house boys?"

"I'm not naked." This was always his defense about being in his underwear. "No, masturbation material for me later, so I do not have to use a mirror."

"Nice!"

Ben winked. "No, I want my mom to see that I am keeping my room clean here."

"We just now cleaned the room." I sat down on my bed and took notice of how much nicer the room looked.

He waved a hand at me. "She doesn't have to know that."

"So you are sending her a picture of you standing in your underwear with the vacuum cleaner?"

Ben grew concerned. "Oh shit! I didn't think about that. I suppose I'd better put on some clothes. Will you take the picture? I don't think the angle was right either." He pulled on a pair of shorts, leaving them unzipped. "How's this?"

"Only if you put a finger in your mouth." I put my pointer finger on my bottom lip to demonstrate. Ben held up his middle finger and put the top of it in his mouth, leaving the rest, clearly showing he was flipping the camera off. I could not resist and snapped a photo.

"Solo, you ass!" He came over and wrestled me for the camera. I fought to keep a hold of it. In the end, he got it away from me. He pointed it at me. "Your turn for a picture." I gave him a sneer. He insisted, "Come on!"

I stood up and as I did, I pulled off my shirt. Ben grinned and snapped a shot. I held up my pointer finger. "Not yet." Then I undid my pants. Ben's eyes got big. I instructed, "You better take the picture before I lose my nerve."

Ben took the picture. Then we set the timer and took one together with our flies undone, another one with shirts off with our pants fastened and the waistband of our underwear sticking out. Ben put on a shirt and I took the

picture for him to send to his mom. I put my shirt back on as Ben instructed me how to pose while he snapped a few shots for me to send to my family. It was not until the family photos that I became concerned with the previous photos I'd taken. It was a fleeting concern since we were having fun.

We put on socks and shoes, making our way outside for a few pictures. The sun was out, but it was too damn cold, as we kept remarking, to be outside for any length of time. Back in our room, we decided to trade clothes and take a picture of Ben in my clothes and I in his, most of which were done together. Then we managed to convince each other to put on various clothes and do countless poses. We got to laughing so hard, in a few pictures we appeared as if we'd been bawling our eyes out.

As we goofed off. Ben stripped back down to his blue boxer briefs. Now that he was back down to his underwear, I caught myself literally checking Ben out. This was when I realized how good-looking I thought Ben was. I'd admired the beauty of others from time to time. With Ben it was different. I found myself, well, attracted to him.

When I awoke the next morning, Ben was gone. He'd left me a text on my phone, which I'd been too deeply asleep to hear come through. "Not ready to be back to class today. Lucky me. Text if you want to do breakfast." He'd sent the message at 9:06 a.m. It was 11:20 now, almost lunch hour. I imagined that Ben had eaten breakfast already. I knew that I would have. I thought about sending him a text to see if he wanted to do lunch, but since there was nowhere I had to be today, I was in no rush.

I spotted a box of cookies from the previous night that Ben had wanted me to try. Since I had already brushed my teeth, I hadn't been in the mood for a snack, and had not tried them then. I picked up the box and the cookies soon became my breakfast. Ben and I had been up until 3:00 a.m. last night. This had become the routine we'd fallen into returning to the freedom of living on our own without the burden of classes.

Consuming one cookie after another, my mouth dried out and I searched for the soda bottle I'd opened and taken only a few drinks out of before bed. It was not on my nightstand, where I was sure I'd put it. Nor was it on my desk. I looked around the room, my eye catching a glimpse of it on the floor, by Ben's nightstand next to the pair of underwear I guessed he'd worn yesterday. I walked over and picked up the soda and Ben was on my mind.

It was more than seeing my roommate and the closest friend I had away from home in his skivvies. I'd always liked Ben's personality. He was witty, charming and sweet. Most guys I knew were not all that nurturing. Ben did not seem to care what anyone thought. Then there was, as I'd mentioned before, his sense of humor, as warped as my own.

That was it! All of the sudden I thought I had everything all figured out. I shared a bond and closeness with Ben that I'd never shared with anyone else before. Sure, I'd had friends before, good ones, but then again I didn't have the connection with them I had with Ben. I was pleased with myself as I popped another cookie into my mouth.

My sureness lasted as long as it took me to chew and swallow that cookie. Ben was right about the cookies, they were delicious! I was about to finish what was left in the box. I was looking for any distraction not to deal with my situation. I'd never been one to stuff my feelings and as tasty as the cookies were I needed something with more substance. I decided to take a shower and go out to get something to eat, even if I only went to the cafeteria.

When I returned to the room, Ben was waiting for me. He was messing around on his computer. "Solo! There you are sleepyhead! I thought you might still be asleep when I didn't get a response to either of my messages."

"Either message?" I grabbed my phone. He had in fact sent me another message. I clicked to read it, "You wanna do me?" There were a couple blank lines. "Or at least have lunch." I glanced in his direction and he was grinning, obviously proud of himself. "I'd love to do you! But I will settle for lunch."

Ben was dividing his attention between his computer and joking around with me. "Nice! I didn't even have to buy to get you to put out!"

I toweled off and slid on my boxers. "Don't be spreading around that I'm easy."

"I won't tell that you are, if you don't tell that I am." Ben beamed.

There was that smile again. So cute, I thought. Then I tried to push the idea out of my head. I sneered, disappointed with whatever my problem was. Ben and I had always talked like this with each other. It was just goofing around. It was our thing. There was nothing behind it. I tried my hardest to shove any analytical notions or questioning of myself from my head as I finished getting dressed.

When I was putting on my socks and shoes, Ben lifted his shirt to rub his hand on his bare stomach. I watched intently as he rubbed his six-pack. My attention became so focused on Ben that I stopped getting dressed all together.

“Solo, you ready yet?” Ben shot up out of his chair and walked over to the door. “I’m starving!”

“Me too.” I hustled to finish getting dressed, grabbing my wallet and keys and darted out the door behind him.

The campus cafeteria was still rather quiet with students filtering back in from break. Ben was part of the select few who had to start back on Monday. Most students, like me were starting back on Wednesday. Today was also Viking Day. Vikings were Western Washington University’s mascot, at Mount Baker, so most of the students on campus, headed there for the day. It was a big deal going up on Mount Baker and playing in the snow. Since I’d been in Washington State, I’d experienced four snow days, which were also the only snow days I’d ever experienced in my life. It was beautiful, I will admit, but I was cold enough most days on campus so the idea of seeking out somewhere cold didn’t make much sense to me.

Ben liked the snow, but also agreed with me that he was not going to seek it out. I learned this when these girls were trying to dry hump him while in the process of inviting us to a party prior to Winter Break. Melody had seen the girls talking to Ben and me, which caused Melody to go off on him about flirting with other girls. Although I thought Melody was a bitch and never cared much for her, I had to admit that she was for the most part nice to me. She’d seen the way Ben and I talked with each other, which was way flirtier than we’d talked with those girls and she never had a problem with it. Listening to Melody bitch and throw accusations at Ben, not even taking him to talk in private was how my strong opinion about her had grown. So far, since we’d been back, I’d not seen her. If Ben had seen her, he hadn’t said anything. I was fine with her being out of our lives.

We had lunch in the cafeteria. Only six other people total were there and four of them were workers. I’d never seen the place so sparsely occupied while it was open. Most of the time when we went through the lines to get food, it was grab before someone else took what you wanted and go so you could get through the line. Even with the process of a variety of food to choose from and simply swiping your campus ID card, I’d learned the hard way that I needed to keep track of my expenditures somewhat. As long as I did not go over \$16 a day on three meals, I would be all right as far as money went for food.

With so few students around, the woman who was in charge of the lunchroom told us to take whatever we wanted and it was on the house. Ben and I piled up our trays with more food than we would ever consume. I'd begun with the items I never got because they were expensive and would not stick with me in the long run. Ben had the idea of grabbing wrapped items, such as the baked goods of Rice Krispy treats, various cookies and brownies. When the lady in charge saw us grabbing them, she came out with a bag and dumped the contents of the basket in it. Handing it to us she said, "You boys could definitely use these more than I can."

We both thanked her profusely for her generosity. She appeared delighted in making us happy. This momentarily made me think of life back home, because she reminded me of my mom.

This feeling did not last long. Ben was all jazzed about, "Our plentiful source of food!" He kept on talking about how great it was to be here and how we could stuff ourselves to the gills.

His idea sounded like a good one to me. After all, we had all this food. If we did not eat it, it was going to go into the trash. We began with eating various things and commented on them. Then we worked our way into trying items that the other person had not grabbed. Each of us would give the other one the other half and say something like, "You gotta try this!"

Then I had the dumbest fucking idea in the world. "Let's see who can eat the most chicken strips in a minute."

Ben, being as wise as me, was sure to shoot down my offer. "Great idea! Solo, you're going down!"

We watched the clock and agreed to begin as soon as the big hand passed twelve. It was only a few seconds away. Those few seconds seemed to take an eternity. Ben and I put on our game faces, both giving the other serious glances and some trash talking about how the other was going down.

"Go!" Ben said, as if I'd not been watching the clock along with him to know when to start.

We were off on our eating race. I had chewed and swallowed two whole chicken strips while Ben was just a little over half way through with one. My fifth strip in, my mouth was dry and I could feel chewed chicken strip in my throat. I grabbed my soda and took a drink to keep from choking. This move was all that Ben needed to take the lead. I quickly shoved another strip in my

mouth. Then another, immediately followed by another and another. I was a chicken strip chewing machine. Before I knew it, we were both down to our last strip. Frantically I chewed away seeing Ben doing the same as we were eye-to-eye.

“Done!” we both said at the same time. This caused the both of us to laugh. This was when I noticed we’d gone two minutes past our proposed time limit.

Ben was suggesting another challenge as I was discovering just how full I was. I felt as if I was going to burst. I was about to express this thought when Ben suddenly grabbed his stomach. “I need to go use the bathroom.”

“Me too!” I knew what he was talking about as my own stomach cramped. Leaving behind our trays of food and bag of baked goods, we both darted for the closest bathroom.

Winter quarter was in full swing and the workload was easy so far— mostly reading for classes and a couple of assignments. Ben and I had one class each that were pretty much the same. Although they were under different names, the instructors were assigning the same work and presenting identical lectures. We decided to share the book since we had class at different times. The second day in, we decided to share the answers for our homework too. Our justification was, if the teachers were not going to make an effort on the content for their classes, we were going to put out the minimal effort on the work. Neither class was going to have quizzes or tests. The only thing we would be missing was the learning. This was doubtful since Ben and I discussed the class regularly as we shared answers and tweaked a few words and phrases not to have every response the same.

We fell into a routine, or at least I did. Ben would come into the room and off would come his shirt. I would busy myself, making sure that I could see him take it off. This was when I noticed something I never had until I’d developed an interest in Ben. When Ben’s clothes came off, he had my undivided interest. In order to check him out, I was being particularly careful on his undressing sessions so that Ben would not see me watching him. When Ben did not think I was watching him, he would flex and check himself out in the mirror. Maybe that’s all it was, me being a friend to Ben and giving him what he needed, someone to notice his body.

I tried to convince myself of this as I eagerly waited for him to take off his jeans and strut around the room in nothing but his underwear. On this particular

day, he was distracted with various stuff. Something on his computer, looking for a movie that he never watched, hanging up his laundry, which was never a priority, back to his computer again. Then his phone rang and I knew from experience his clothes always came off when he was on the phone. I was thrilled since he would be distracted and probably not even notice me. The call was short and he was back to messing around at the computer again.

I'd gotten so eager to see his pants come off that I almost asked if he was going to take them off. I had reading I needed to complete so that I could write a response paper. Rather than finishing what I needed to do, I'd become obsessed with waiting for the unveiling. I wasn't about to miss the view, which I knew was silly since seeing Ben strip down was a regular occurrence.

I am sure the wait was what prompted me to make the comment that I did. That, or I am just a total freak of nature. Ben finally took off his pants. I expressed a thought that I should have kept in my head. "You really do have a nice body."

"Thanks," Ben seemed uncomfortable.

I was shocked I'd just blurted that out to him. In an effort to cover up my error, I attempted to joke. "I can see why you strut around as you do. A fine thing like you. If you've got it, you might as well flaunt it."

"Sure," he frowned.

I was only making it worse. I could feel my face start to redden. I buried myself in my reading and from there worked on my paper. Ben had his own work to do that night. Beyond some casual conversation, mostly academically related, we each kept to ourselves throughout the evening.

My comment marked the start of a change. I thought for sure I would never see Ben's body scantily clothed ever again. I would soon discover how wrong I was.

The next night, Ben caught me checking him out. My plan for saving face with Ben was to appear disinterested in him, which meant no looking. I'd tossed and turned throughout most of the night as I formulated this plan and then again when I'd come back to our room to take a nap. Instead, I ended up searching the internet, my focus was on women in underwear, with no luck. Then I decided to look at men in their underwear. All this accomplished was putting my mind back on Ben. Discouraged and beat, I crashed for a few hours, never getting into a deep sleep.

I woke up when Ben returned to our room. He was friendly and we were exchanging jokes as we typically did. He made a reference that put me at ease about the incident the night before once and for all. "I was thinking we stay in tonight, find something to eat here and stay in bed cuddling."

I retorted, "Only if we're naked."

"A must."

"Sounds like a plan."

Ben took his shirt off, tossing it onto his bed on the way over to sit at his desk chair. In the chair, he undid his jeans and slid out of them only slightly lifting up his butt, otherwise staying in his chair.

In my defense, I was tired and my eyes had wandered for a while over Ben's body. I worked my eyes from his feet up his muscular built legs with little hair on them, his well-defined package, firm stomach, muscular pecs and that face, with those eyes. Those eyes were watching me, as I'd been watching him. By the time I noticed Ben was watching me watching him, the damage was done.

Ben did not seem the least bit bothered. I thought he would be a little uncomfortable. Even though Ben played it cool with people checking him out, I'd noticed a few times he had some level of discomfort, with a few select people. I expected to find him fully clothed the next time I came into the room.

When I walked in and found Ben fully clothed, I thought the days of eyeing his near naked body were over. He was sitting at his desk, doing something on his computer. I walked over and put my stuff down on my own desk, debating whether or not to get to work on my homework while the class was still fresh in my head.

Even though Ben had said hello to me when I walked in, he kept his attention on the book he was reading. He appeared to be into it, so I did not want to interrupt him. I wanted to talk to him about what had happened the previous night, but I was not sure what to say.

Soon my worries over Ben were out of my mind and I was into reading and working on my homework at my desk. Ben kept his clothes on, a true rarity. I did not concern myself with his state of dress, only focusing on what I needed to get done.

I finished up with work from my class earlier that day and decided to get to work on the questions from the class where Ben and I shared our work. My idea was that if I got most of the work done, I would be in Ben's good graces again.

I was in the middle of the page of questions when Ben climbed off his bed and walked over to me. "You're doing the work on your own?"

"Yeah, I thought I would get a jump on it. You seemed busy."

Ben pulled off the polo shirt he was wearing. He fumbled with getting it over his head, wiggling in front of me, and came close to brushing his body against mine a few times. I didn't think that it was as difficult to remove as Ben was making it out to be. "What have you done so far?"

I struggled to remember what I'd been reading before his removing his shirt distracted me. It seemed easier for me to read the questions and the answers I'd found and written down. I started with question one, reading the question and what I'd answered.

"Good!" Ben said. He moved in close looking at the paper to read along with me. His lips were close enough to my ear, that I could feel his breath. I stopped reading aloud then, because I thought he was reading it to himself, but then he told me, "Go on. Read the rest to me."

It was difficult to read with him in such close proximity to me. I kept on stumbling over words. Ben took no notice.

When I finished sharing what I'd written, Ben moved away from me. "It all sounds good so far. You want to work on it together?"

I turned toward him. "Sure." That was when Ben undid his pants and slid them down, running his hands along his legs. He turned around to bend over and pick them up, shoving his butt towards me.

I speculated that he might be trying to give me a show. When he turned around to fold up his jeans with a smirk on his face, I knew he was messing around. I stuck my tongue out at him. To this, he nodded his head in agreement. I shook my head to disagree.

With the cat out of the bag, so to speak, my own feelings of guilt and questioning myself were gone. For the first time in my life I was experiencing the sexual tension I'd heard my friends talk about. In me, a sexual desire was blooming. I took comfort in the idea that I felt sexually frustrated. On a trip to

one of the libraries on campus, I found plenty of information about what I was experiencing. One of the theories was I was going through a phase. Another was about a sexual awakening. I only read far enough to develop an understanding of what I was experiencing. When it came to reading something that was not about me, such as homosexual inclinations, I'd put the book aside. I was not gay. If I were, I would have found other guys attractive. I neglected to note my lack of finding any female the least bit attractive. Eventually, checking out some guy would get me back to thinking about Ben.

Ben started going out with a group of guys who'd asked him a few times to come hang with them. He'd gone from referring to them as "the pretty boys" to "the guys". Twice now, Ben had invited me to come out with him and the guys, I was simply not into going out. This time he was insistent and practically begged me. If it was not for my head killing me and my needing to get some rest, I would have caved in and gone with him.

My head hurt so much that I did not pay any attention to Ben when he returned from the shower and was trying to figure out what he wanted to wear. With the production he made of putting something on and commenting about it, I knew he was trying to draw me in. I quickly gave him any response and drifted off to sleep.

As I slept, I dreamt Ben was lying next to me cuddled up and putting an arm around me with his hand resting on my chest. I liked having him next to me and even with my head still pounding, I felt better having him there. After a bit of cuddling, he whispered that he had to get going and wanted to know if I wanted him to back out on going out. All I did was look at him, but I could not move to say or suggest that I did not want him to go. Ben kissed me on the forehead. I thought I heard him whisper, "I never expected this to happen. I'm glad that it is." On the other hand, was it "I'm glad that it did"? I tried to recall which, but that was all I could remember of the dream.

I woke up a little after midnight, my headache was gone and I was feeling better than I had in days. Ben was still out. I was torn between reading for a bit and going back to sleep. I ended up deciding to read and kind of wait for Ben to return.

When Ben walked in he was wearing a red, white and blue plaid print buttoned-down shirt, short sleeved. It showed off his bulging muscles and his pecs. The smile on his face told me that the shirt, or better so the body

underneath, had been drawing attention all night. We'd greeted each other and I was attempting to get back into the book I had been reading before he entered.

Ben was not having this. "You should have come out with me tonight. The guys left after an hour. I ended up hanging out with some girls. This one, I had a blast hanging with."

"So you hit it off with a girl?" I tried to mask my disappointment.

Ben shot back, "Not for a relationship though."

I glanced over at him curiously. Once we'd made eye contact, he put his hand up and wiped under his eye, as if brushing something off. Then he moved his hand to rub his chin, making sure my eyes were following it. His hand lowered to the top button of his shirt, which he undid with one hand, his eyes still on me watching him.

Without thinking, I wet my lips. He moved down to the next button and undid it. Then the next. With my mouth closed, I breathed anxiously through my nose. With his shirt halfway unbuttoned, Ben shoved his hand inside of his shirt and caressed one of his pecs, slowly moving his hand to the center of his chest where he massaged it with his fingers for a moment.

Still breathing hard through my nose, I sat still watching him intently. He slowly pulled his hand from his shirt, undoing one more button, reaching his hand inside his shirt to caress the top of his abs briefly before pulling his hand out. He repeated this, working through the remaining two buttons on his shirt. I was feeling light-headed as I was literally holding my breath.

Grabbing each side of his now completely unfastened shirt, he held it closed with tight fists. Holding tight to his shirt, he rubbed his fists on his abs. Slowly rotating them in a circular motion, as he gradually revealed the upper torso I'd seen so many times before. He suddenly snapped his arms back exposing his chest, letting his shirt drop down behind him.

Next, he undid the button on his jeans as he wiggled his hips from side to side, occasionally pushing his package forward. Once the zipper was down, the jeans slid to his ankles revealing his boxer briefs, which were gray tonight. Still moving his hips, he pulled one foot out and with the other kicked the jeans off to the side. I'd never been so tantalized.

He turned around and shook his butt at me, turning his head to look at me. Then he bent over and bounced his butt in my face, again turning to look at me. His balls swung back and forth freely within the confines of the gray boxer briefs. He continued to shake as he stood up again and faced me.

Taking his pointer fingers, he slid them into the side of band on his boxer briefs. Slowly he pushed them down revealing parts that I was not usually privy to seeing. The band of his underwear slid down past his pubic hair.

Thump! My book fell to the floor and made us both jump. Ben slid his fingers around the waistband of his briefs, and pulled them back up. Then he slid them around to the front, pulled the waistband away, briefly, and allowed it to snap as he slid his fingers out. If I'd been closer, I was sure that I would have been able to glance down and see his penis. As if Ben could read my mind, he took two steps closer, slid his fingers into the waistband of his boxer briefs, pulled them forward and pushed his package towards me. I saw only a glimpse of Ben's penis before the band snapped back against his hips.

Ben grinned. "I'm going to go brush my teeth and get to bed. I'll be back in about fifteen minutes. Unless you need longer?"

It took me a second to figure out what he was getting at. I was turned on. Once Ben was out of the room I reached down to pleasure myself. This act of stimulation that was supposed to make me feel so good was quickly interrupted by feelings of guilt. I felt like a freak being sexually worked up over my friend. It did not make sense to me. As I shuffled my hand up and down, my feeling of pleasure dissipated as I went flaccid within my fist.

I continued to pump away, convinced that I was going to "get there" for a few more minutes. I finally gave in to the idea it wasn't going to happen. I sighed in defeat as I took my hand away. I was quite frustrated as I waited for Ben to come back into the room. I was not sure why I was waiting for Ben. It was not as if I was going to talk to him about what was on my mind. Eventually I grabbed my book and went back to reading. This was a good idea, because it took Ben over thirty minutes to "brush his teeth".

Ben returned, told me he was tired and climbed right into bed. I thought for sure he was going to ask me if everything was all right or if I wanted to talk. I played out in my head what I would say if he did and how I thought our conversation would go. As the scenarios rolled through my mind, I was undecided. Although I was tired and on the verge of falling asleep, it would take me another two hours to stop thinking and wind down to be able to get some sleep.

In the end, Ben helped me get to sleep. He'd tossed his comforter off him while he was asleep with his legs spread. I eyed his muscular body, smooth

skin... his package. I thought about the show that he'd put on for me and I was ready. I "brushed my teeth" and was asleep soon after.

Over the next few days, I discovered that the blue were my favorite and red were my least favorite of all of Ben's boxer briefs. Another thing I realized was that when I came in and found Ben clothed, I was more interested in him when he stripped down to his underwear. I had this sneaking suspicion that he knew this. More often than not when I came back to our room he would be wearing clothes. Not for long though. The shirt would come off and the pants moments later. My own feelings of guilt and weirdness soon went away as it became clear he was okay with this.

It appeared that we were complementary to one another. In him knowing I was checking him out and me poorly hiding that I was doing so. As strange as I supposed this was, what happened next gave me comfort and I no longer gave my checking Ben out any further thought.

When I showered in the morning, I would often wear my robe down to the bathroom and come back to the room to dry off and dress. Ben had been up earlier than I had on this particular day, and I was under the impression he would be heading out while I was in the shower. When I'd wished him a good day, he reciprocated the sentiment.

Returning to our room, I found Ben dressed and sitting on his bed reading. Or perhaps he only wanted it to appear that way. People's eyes can give them away. I could read Ben better than that. Wearing the towel around my neck to dry off with, I could have kept my back to him and most likely not even noticed his gaze. Perhaps it was out of my own curiosity that I did not.

Taking off my robe I hung it up leaving me standing completely naked. I saw, out of the corner of my eye, Ben's eyes following my naked body. I was not the least bit self-conscious. Possibly because of all the times that I'd eyed Ben myself, I felt I owed him a chance to gaze upon me in all my glory. I knew it was because I liked the idea of him taking notice of me, even if it was out of plain curiosity. I toweled off, taking a while to dry my hair, leaving my privates out in the open for Ben to admire all he wanted. Then I went over and took my time deciding what boxers to wear. Ben kept his eyes on me the entire time.

The performance I put on for Ben was liberating. He grinned all the way throughout it. I was glad that I'd put on my boxers, followed shortly thereafter by my jeans, because although it was Ben doing the watching, I'd gotten myself

quite worked up. Walking to class, I wondered if Ben could tell that I was getting hard as I danced into my clothes for him. I was not too concerned, because by the time I was fully dressed, Ben was giving me a standing ovation for the show.

I ended up grabbing Ben's package, by accident of course. When I was heading out the door, Ben had grabbed hold of me, wrapping one arm around me. I think he was trying to give me a hug. I spun around and in the process of trying not to fall, my hand ended up catching his crotch. I could not believe that I'd groped him again, which accelerated my partial boner to a full-on one. Feeling relieved that Ben did not return the grab, I darted for the door. "I need to get to class."

Ben was right behind me. "Me too!"

I tried to avert my eyes from looking at Ben since I knew that his penis was firm to my touch. Ben and I talked about meeting for lunch and that was about all there was time for us to discuss. Once we were downstairs, Ben and I parted ways towards opposite ends of campus.

I suppose it was my fault. I'd told Ben that I was going to be meeting with my study group until at least ten pm. It was not as if we answered to each other, but it was more so a combination of common courtesy as well as someone knowing where you were. This had been Ben's idea and it provided me with a feeling of comfort early on, being far away from home and now out on my own. Ben was from the city and even though he'd never admitted so, I think he was a little homesick. Or perhaps it could simply be his outgoing personality and need for connection.

People liked Ben. I liked Ben. He was confident, outgoing and an all-around fun personality. Don't get me wrong, I am not some sort of an introvert. Perhaps the number one thing Ben and I had in common was a sense of humor. Our jokes have no boundaries. The shock factor has always been a thrill for both of us. I'd always been like this.

After all, when you are a guy my age, nobody gets when you are not interested in sex. Humor provides the perfect facade. Joking about sex, no one gets concerned about your lack of interest in sex. The jokes themselves have gotten me into trouble. Fortunately, for me, the more graphic I was when talking with guys the more they were amused by me. Ben was very much the same.

The major difference between Ben and me is that he has a hearty sex drive. This was something I guess I was oblivious to until we came back from our winter break.

So getting back to what was my fault. I was supposed to be out until about ten pm. Due to the lack of work that was needed for my class and other factors, getting together to study was deemed unnecessary by all the group participants. I decided I would head back to my dorm room and get to bed early. The last couple of days I hadn't been feeling up to par, yet again. I hoped it was only a cold and I was not getting the flu, which was running rampant around campus. I could not remember what Ben said he had going on tonight, but I was sure he would be out. I was formulating the note I would leave for him.

Bursting through the door, I found Ben with his hands full. Well, one of them anyways. I froze, as did he. I was not sure what to do. As much as I tried, I could not take my eyes off Ben's hard penis. Sure, I'd seen Ben in his underwear often. I'd never seen what was below the various colors of boxer briefs he wore.

In my own defense, Ben was not circumcised, unlike myself. Here was a penis different than my own and frankly, it was fascinating. I closed the door. As if my staring at Ben was not weird enough, he sat with his hand gripping his erection. We both remained frozen for what seemed like a long time.

I was the first to speak. "Sorry."

"It's all right." Ben moved his hand over his erection slightly. "I didn't expect you back so soon."

"Well, I was so exhausted. I planned on heading to bed early. I had no idea you'd be... Well."

Ben giggled. "Speaking of which, do you mind if I finish up? I am so fucking horny. I feel as if I am going to explode if I don't cum soon. You don't have to leave. I don't even care if you watch. I just need to finish up."

"Thanks, but I am beat." I stripped down to my boxers and T-shirt before climbing into bed. I felt as if I was going to pass out. I lay down on my side, facing the wall. Involuntarily I listened to not only Ben slapping the salami, but also his occasional groans. These noises together had me feeling all hot and horny.

Eventually, though I wasn't sure why, my curiosity got the better of me. I'd seen in plain sight what Ben was doing and it wasn't as if I hadn't seen enough

to paint the picture in my head. I slowly turned over, hoping my bed would not creak or Ben would notice. I inched little by little going from facing the wall to the room. My heart began to race.

I finally turned enough that I could see Ben. It was then I realized that when he was at the computer, his back was to me. I eyed him up and down, enough to see him bucking his hips with his underwear still around one ankle.

“Uuugh! Oooo! Oooo! Uugh! Oooo! Ugh! Ooo!” He was done.

I closed my eyes and tried to drift off to sleep, even though I was now erect myself.

The next morning I awoke with my penis as hard as a rock. I'd only experienced this a few times in my life and only knew of two ways to get rid of it. Take a piss or masturbate. As solid as my erection was, I knew that a piss was not going to get rid of it. I glanced over and Ben was motionless and appeared asleep. I reached my hand down into my boxers and gripped my penis, noticing it seemed to be larger than normal. As I tugged away at it, my feeling of intense pleasure was interrupted intermittently by wondering if I had stayed hard all night.

With my motion limited, I decided to poke my erection through the hole in my boxers. There, much better, I thought as I did the five-knuckle shuffle. I came quickly and subsequently it landed all over the front of the shirt I'd worn to bed. Cumming felt so good I let out a groan. I pulled off my shirt and balled it up before tossing it on the floor beside my bed. I was feeling good.

I heard a snicker coming from Ben in his bed. He turned over and gave me an “I knew what you were doing” smirk.

I grinned. “That felt wonderful!”

“Yes, it does.” Ben reached his hand below his covers. Although he'd tried to tuck it away, I could tell he was sporting some wood. I was going to make a joke, but before I could, he caught my eyes wandering. “I just need to pee. I'm going to take a shower too.” He gathered up his stuff, pulled on some shorts and his flip-flops and went out the door leaving me with, “Good thing you finally got off before you burst.”

Ben was out the door before I could come up with a remark. I was bugged by the slammed door. This didn't bother me as much after he'd left the room

and a thought entered my head. I knew Ben had been looking at porn the night before. What I hadn't noticed was what type of porn it was he had been looking at. I'd been so wrapped up in trying to see him getting off. I'd not paid any attention to what was on his monitor.

I was now to the point where I didn't have a problem with finding Ben attractive. Not until I found myself missing out on an entire class lecture because I was daydreaming about him. Numerous thoughts were flooding my head and with all of the conflicting ideas, I was getting frustrated at my inability to sort them out. College was supposed to be the place where I grew smarter and all I was accomplishing was feeling more confused than ever.

I decided to go for a walk in an effort to clear my head. I wasn't alone for very long even though I went along a different path than the one I normally took. I intended to steer clear of my room and especially of Ben.

I was so wrapped up in my own head thinking, contemplating and wondering what was going on with me that I didn't even notice Ben come up to me until he said something. "Hey, Solo! What's up?"

When I jumped, he giggled, amused with himself. Those bright shiny teeth and his laugh made me smile. It was almost like there was a magnetic pull that brought us together. I was about to say that I was thinking about him, and not in the friend sort of concept. "Just going for a little walk. I wanted to clear my head. Class today was pretty deep."

"Huh?" he questioned. The way he was looking at me, I could tell that he was waiting for further clarification on what was bothering me.

"I don't know." In many ways, I was admitting the truth. "I guess I'm just feeling conflicted and I want to work some things out in my head."

"Over a class?" He caught himself, "Sorry about that. It must have been pretty deep." I was not the least bit surprised by what came next from him. "Do you want to talk to me about it? I know when something is bothering me, it helps to bounce it off of someone else."

"Nah! I think I need to clear my head."

As I continued to walk, Ben kept walking beside me. I considered telling him that I wanted to be alone. On the other hand, it was nice to have him there in case I changed my mind and wanted to talk. Not that I was about to admit to

him what was bothering me. It was awkward enough that I'd developed a crush on my roommate. I was barely admitting it to myself, so there was no way I was going to confess this to Ben.

We made our way to the edge of campus and an area I'd never explored before. Typically, we'd only left campus for the grocery stores and restaurants. For the most part, Ben was quiet, except to comment on the sights or point something out. I'd shrug, eventually I'd respond with one word, then a brief sentence. I knew what he was trying to do. As I was getting set to put a stop to his talk, I suddenly felt weighed down by a thought I could not get out of my head.

Ben was pointing out a house that he said was similar to his in Seattle. I liked to hear about where he was from and getting to know him better. Ben could tell that I was interested and kept on talking. Listening to him freed me from the burden of my own troubling thoughts. I started telling him about my own home. We started asking questions, sharing and comparing Seattle to Ravenswood.

Walking and talking put me at ease. I found myself suddenly asking, "Do you think that I'm odd?"

"Yes," Ben answered without any hesitation and my stomach immediately knotted. He followed up with, "Aren't we both odd? I mean everybody is odd in some way. It's those odd things that make us unique individuals."

With his comment, I developed the courage to push the envelope. "Have you ever been attracted to someone who you know you shouldn't be?" Ben was quiet for a bit, as he thought this over. I became nervous and I had the need to fill the silence. "I bet you've always had girls attracted to you."

Ben frowned. "I suppose I have. I've pretty much been able to get any girl to go out with me that I've shown an interest in. In answer to your question, there was one girl though. She was dating a buddy of mine in high school. The majority of the time she acted as if I didn't exist. I can remember going to great lengths to try and get her to like me."

"Did she ever?" I had a feeling I knew the answer.

Ben sighed. "No, she never did. My buddy and I eventually quit being friends. Let's just say I made a real ass of myself and in the end they were meant to be."

"That sucks." I felt bad for Ben.

“It does. That’s how life is sometimes. You want something so badly that you don’t realize what you have until it is gone.” Ben shook his head as he let out a sigh.

I took a deep breath. There it was, Ben telling me plain as day that a relationship was not going to happen with us. Part of me wanted to run away from Ben. The other part was glad that he was honest with me.

Our conversation descended into awkward silence and we were back to pointing out and focusing on the scenery. I took to heart what Ben had said and thought deeply about what we had. I didn’t want to lose him as a friend. In reality, he’d been quite cool with not freaking out when he’d caught me checking him out and he even put on a show to be my eye candy. I knew not many guys would be willing to do that.

Ben suggested, “You want to start heading back towards campus?”

“Sure.” I imagined he needed some space himself before I ended up discussing he and I being an us.

Ben put an arm around me. “Good! Because it is too hard to make out with you with all this walking.”

I snorted out a laugh having been caught off guard by his remark. Like that, I was fine again. “That doesn’t mean we cannot hold hands.”

Ben smiled. “Such a great idea!” He took his arm off my shoulder and grabbed my hand.

Although it felt very strange, I kept hold of Ben’s hand as we walked. When we came along a pair of women out power walking, I tried to pull my hand away. Ben held on tightly to it. As the women walked past, Ben said, “Come on honey, you need to face your fears. You know how worked up this gets me!”

The women scowled, obviously taking offense, which was the response Ben was looking for. We both tried not to laugh as we distanced ourselves from them. Ben and I held hands most of the way back to campus. I liked it. We did not encounter any further prudes.

Our weekends were free, with the exception of a couple of hours of homework. I’d fallen into the habit of playing catch up on Sunday night, often leading to being up most of the night and tired the next day. I found myself increasingly distracted. I was not alone with the distraction. My concerns about

Ben being uncomfortable with my sudden increased interest in him were unfounded. We were now hanging out practically all of the time.

We were watching a movie again, some foreign flick with English subtitles. I don't think either one of us knew the name or found the story interesting. There had been a sex scene early on in the film and we were watching as a story unfolded. This was what kept Ben from shutting off the movie. Now farther into the movie, the two male main characters were with this one girl. We had a pretty good idea of what was going to happen as the movie led up to a threesome. As we watched, I kept finding myself distracted by how fascinated I was with watching Ben's reactions. By the end of the scene, I was feeling pretty worked up. I would soon discover that I was not the only one.

Ben paused the movie and looked over to me. "You wanna jerk off together?"

It seemed to be rare that I ever felt like this. I casually agreed, "Sure."

Ben got up from his own bed, walked over and lay down beside me on my bed. We propped ourselves up on the pillows. This made it easier to see each other.

As Ben pulled his erect penis and balls out and letting them rest on top of the waistband of his underwear, he said, "This always makes me cum faster." I mimicked him and did the same with my own stiff penis, resting my nuts on the waistband of my boxers.

We sat there for a moment exposed to one another. We looked at each other's faces and our eyes moved to each other's hard penises. My head felt light, as I grew more and more excited. The head of my own penis throbbed. Ben pulled his foreskin tightly back, exposing the head of his penis. I was curious if pulling the skin back hurt.

Ben let go long enough to wrap his hand around the length. He moved his hand up and down slowly, as if he was signaling to me. I grabbed my own hardness tightly and began to move my hand. I thought I was going to cum quickly, so I stopped and loosened my grip. It still felt good. As Ben picked up his rhythm, I increased my own. I could see the head of Ben's penis poke out a little and slide back in a rapid rhythm. The sight of this made me grow harder.

I watched as Ben moved his hand up and down, his balls bouncing up and down. I could feel my own doing the same. Each time I felt close to cumming, Ben would slow down. I wondered if he was trying to make it last. Never in my life had masturbating felt so pleasurable. I did not want it to end.

A tingling went up my back and I pulled my shirt over my head, exposing my stomach. I came earlier than Ben, with a huge load of cum splattering across my belly. Unlike when I had pleased myself alone, the feeling of guilt did not encompass me. Instead, I felt satisfied. I kept hold of my penis as I watched Ben continue jerking away. I could feel myself grow hard again and I decided to take advantage of the moment. Ben seemed to like this, since I saw a smile grow on his face.

As Ben came, he held his foreskin back tight. The amount of cum he expelled was less than my own. It shot up and landed right above his belly button. He let go of his penis and it fell to his belly.

I stopped jerking and took my hand away. Ben grabbed me by the wrist and guided my hand back to my erection. "Keep going. I'll get going in a moment."

I'd never cum twice in a row, and felt anxious and concerned about whether I would be able to. Just as Ben said he would, he started back up again. It seemed to take me longer this time, but I eventually got there. Ben grunted, thrust and tensed up.

At last Ben stopped. "Okay, now it's just hurting."

"That's not good."

He got up with his privates still hanging out in front of his underwear, walked over and grabbed a towel. He paused with it in his hand, as if trying to decide whether to wipe up my mess or to admire the amount that had come out. Then he handed me the towel. I cleaned up. My penis was shrinking down as I tucked it away. Ben took back the towel and wiped himself off.

He pulled back his foreskin. "I have to make sure I get it all cleaned up." Once he had his entire penis and the surrounding area wiped down, he tucked it back into his underwear.

I know Ben said something to me. His words were not clear though. I drifted off to sleep before I could ask him to repeat himself. I was happy we'd just done what we had together. No analyzing or thinking about it. It was a good time. I felt awesome.

The next morning Ben woke me asking me if I'd like to join him for breakfast. A few months ago, Ben heard about a restaurant near campus that offered all-you-could-eat pancakes. Ever since then, he'd talked about us going

to have breakfast there one morning. The problem was that as late as we were up on the weekends, by the time we got up and going breakfast was over.

We joked around as we always had. In many ways, I felt as if we were closer than ever. The pancakes were delicious and we were into our second plate of them when our conversation got deep.

I made a sort of joke. "You know you are the first person I've ever done anything like that with."

"You were for me too." Ben smiled.

I looked him in the eye. "I mean I've... Well..." My stomach knotted and I wondered why I even brought this up.

Ben smiled. "You always remember your first. It's not like we had sex, but I get what you are saying."

"Thank you!" I was relieved. "I just did not want things to get strange between us."

"That won't happen until we have sex together. I mean where we touch each other more than ourselves." Ben shoved a bite of pancake into his mouth. I nearly choked on my own bite, and Ben almost spit his out laughing so hard. "Lighten up, Solo! We're fine."

I attempted to chuckle, feeling silly. "So sex is still an option for us."

"You bet!" he agreed heartily.

Although I knew it was the weird humor we shared, I found myself wishing for some truth in it. I shook the thought from my head. What Ben and I were doing was normal experimental behavior. It was just two normal guys having a tiny bit of fun.

A reality check came to me suddenly during a dorm party. All week long, each time Ben or I were in the hall, somebody would stop us to make sure that we were attending the dorm party on Friday night. Neither Ben nor I had ever been into partying. However, we did attend them now and then. This weekend we were resolved to take part. This was because everyone in the building seemed to be going and with the pressure of not wanting to be antisocial outcasts we needed to participate.

I'd convinced myself that the party was a good idea because ever since we'd returned from break Ben and I had spent most of our free time together, either

out with others or shut up in our room. I thought it would be good to meet some other people and perhaps meet someone else that I could develop a romantic interest in besides Ben.

A few of the girls that discussed the party with me seemed nice enough and I thought it was worth getting a chance to get to know them better, even if it was to become friends.

The evening of the party, Ben and I were welcomed by a pair of guys who lived down the hall from us. Their names were Derrick and Justin. They were sitting together on one of these great big chairs I'd often seen people reading or hanging out at. As soon as the other chair opened, Ben flopped down, grabbing me by the arm to join him. It was snug, yet comfortable.

Justin and Ben started gabbing away as if they were long lost friends. That was something else about Ben, I noted. He could easily start up a conversation with anyone. I'd always had to warm up to people before I could reach his level of comfort.

We soon learned that Derrick and Justin had known each other since they were kids and came up to go to school together. Derrick was the quieter of the two and seemed to let Justin do most of the talking. The way they acted reminded me of how my mom and dad were together when they were talking with people.

I don't know if it was the way Justin talked and maybe the way he constantly moved his hands as he spoke. Something struck me as odd about him at first, but I was unable to put my finger on it.

Ben must have thought something was different about the pair as well. "You two seem very close."

"We are!" Justin was enthusiastic. "Derrick is my world."

Derrick smiled. He must have seen the confusion that I knew was registering on both our faces. Derrick put his arm around Justin. "What Justin is trying to say is that we are a couple."

"A couple?" I blurted out as if given the answer to a question, I should have been able to clue into.

"Yeah!" Justin seemed so proud. "We'd been best friends for years and, well, one thing led to another and here we are, boyfriends."

“You make a good couple.” Ben stated. I was glad that he said something nice because I was sure my jaw dropped. “Does anybody need a drink? I have cotton mouth.”

Justin shot up out of the chair. “I’ll go with you.” He glanced back at Derrick, “Finish that up so you can start on your next one.” Justin pointed somewhere across the room and led the way with Ben following him.

“Someone is trying to get me drunk,” Derrick admitted.

“Ah!” I’d never talked with anyone who was gay to my knowledge. I was not sure what to talk to him about.

“Sorry if we freaked you out.” Derrick took a drink. “Justin thought that you and Ben might be a couple. I guess not.”

“How did you know you were gay?”

“Ah! The ultimate question. I didn’t. Something always seemed missing from my life. I knew that I liked being around Justin more than anyone, including my girlfriend. Then, one night, one thing led to another and soon after Justin and I put the pieces together.” Derrick appeared so happy with the recollection.

There was an urgency to my need to know a few things before Ben returned with Justin. “So if you and Justin never got together, you’d be straight?”

“Doubtful. I think I would have eventually figured it out.” Derrick took a moment and grinned. “Justin and I were destined to fall in love at one point. We’ve always been close and when it came to getting to this level, everything felt so right.” Derrick took another drink and continued, “We’ve had our share of ups and downs. Such as my parents freaking out about what my narrow-minded mom called ‘choosing to be gay’. She and my dad are coming around. They’ve both always liked Justin, which I think makes it easier.”

I felt dizzy. I’d never even contemplated what me getting involved with Ben would do to my family. This cinched it. I needed to find a girl. Derrick was a nice guy though. I did not want to go away from him. I’d never been able to talk with anyone about stuff like this.

As Derrick gulped down his drink, I saw Ben and Justin returning. Justin was built and I could see what Derrick would find visually appealing about him. Then I looked at Derrick and could see what Justin would find great about him. Ben smiled at me and I thought again how great he looked tonight.

Ben handed me a cup and I took a sip. I did not know why I was surprised there was no alcohol in it. Ben and I had discussed right before leaving our room whether or not we were going to drink. We'd decided that we were going to wait and see. The previous parties we'd gone to together, neither of us drank. Although my head was spinning, I contemplated drinking.

I took Ben's cup from his hand, in hopes that he had alcohol in his. Taking a drink, I soon discovered that it was only soda, as mine was. Ben smiled at me. "You okay?"

"I thought mine tasted flat." I covered as I handed him my cup so he could taste it for himself.

He took a drink. "I don't think either taste flat. You can have either one you want though."

I took my cup back and handed Ben his. Taking another drink I smiled. "You're right."

"If you wanted a kiss, all you had to do was ask." Ben pointed at the lip of his cup and took another drink before handing it back to me.

"That's no kiss!" Justin was loud enough to get a few people to glance our direction. Then he planted a kiss on Derrick's mouth.

Ben explained, "I was telling Justin about our flirtatious moments together."

Ben and I spent most of the night with Derrick and Justin. They were fun to hang out with. I discovered that gay guys were not that much different from the other guys I'd hung out with over the years. Ben and Justin both ended up with their shirts off in the warmth of the evening. I knew Derrick at least caught me checking out not only Ben, but also Justin throughout the night.

I'm not sure what it was, but something jarred me awake. My eyes opened briefly, as I glanced over at the clock, to see it was two in the morning. As I was closing my eyes, I discovered Ben's covers were off him. There was enough light in the room that I could easily see that Ben was sporting wood and was maxing out the front of his boxer briefs. From across the room I watched him for a while. It appeared to me that he was slowly gyrating his hips and his lips were moving like he was kissing somebody invisible. My heart raced as I watched him curiously wondering what his length would feel like to hold on to.

As I observed Ben, I became more and more excited. Not only did I want to touch for myself, I wanted to help him get off. I closed my eyes ever so briefly

and reached my hands down and grabbed my own now-throbbing cock. Holding on to it tightly, I thought that maybe I would jerk off and then go back to sleep. After all, I could watch Ben without him knowing that I was staring at him.

I'm not sure what came over me but I tossed off my own covers and slowly crept across the room. Ben was still asleep, gyrating away in his bed. Reaching out my hand, I could see it was shaking. For a moment I thought about going back to bed and keeping with my original idea of getting myself off and then going back to sleep. I willed myself to reach out my hand towards Ben's hard-on. I got it less than an inch away and then I pulled my hand back.

A fear came over me as I thought about the boundary that I would be crossing if I literally violated my roommate while he was asleep. With my hand in close proximity as Ben continued to thrust harder and harder, Ben eventually brushed his hard penis against my hand. I figured the damage had already been done and this was what let me to do what I did next. As my hand stayed outside of Ben's boxer briefs, I slowly closed it around his penis.

Ben let out a moan that startled me and I pulled my hand back. Only slightly though. My heart was racing and I froze, thinking Ben was waking up. When I realized that Ben was still dreaming and thrusting away, I replaced my hand on Ben's penis and this time I squeezed it. He must have liked this because he continued to moan and he thrust way harder.

Suddenly I stopped and he pulled down his boxer briefs so fast that my hand went from touching the outside of his boxer briefs to direct contact. I looked up. Ben opened his eyes briefly, and smiled at me, nodding his head as if giving his approval. Before I could grow scared I closed my eyes, grabbed his penis and began to tug on it again. He went back to gyrating his hips and moaning. I was so excited I couldn't believe that this was actually happening. It felt like it was a dream.

Then my alarm clock startled me awake. I opened my eyes and looked over to see Ben covered and asleep in his bed. I was the only one hard right now. I was disappointed that it was only a dream. So much so, that I got up, threw on some clothes and went for a long walk to clear my head.

We were having lunch in the cafeteria with the group we ate with a few days a week, when one of the girls pointed out something that seemed to be plainly obvious to everyone else. Ben had gotten up to go get an ice cream,

asking me if I wanted one. This was not unusual, because he always asked me if I wanted dessert when he was going to get it. Sometimes, even if I would tell him that I did not want it, he would bring it back to me anyways. I would do the same for him.

“He’s flirting with you,” she stated and the others nodded in agreement.

“He is?” I played dumb.

“Come on! You like it!” one of the guys stated. He was not buying it.

“What’s the deal with you two?” another guy asked. Neither was he.

A different girl spoke up, “I think it’s cute.” Her friend quickly agreed.

“Whatever!” I got up from my seat. “You’re all crazy. I need to get to class.”

I darted away, feeling their eyes on me as they continued the discussion. I assumed speculating about Ben and me. It was ridiculous. Ben and I were only friends. I could not get out of the cafeteria fast enough.

Once outside, I felt dumb darting out as I had. I walked as quickly as I could to distance myself from the cafeteria. With some time to think, I wished that I had either played it down or argued with them. How was I going to live this down? I would end up running into each of them at some point, since we all lived in the same building.

“Solo!” I heard Ben shout. I kept on moving as if I did not hear him.

“Solo!” This time he was closer.

I stopped and turned around. He was running, carrying an ice cream sandwich in each hand.

He was only a few feet away from me when he asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” I snapped, immediately regretting not sounding more convincing.

Ben held out a hand with one of the ice cream sandwiches. “Here, this is for you.” When I did not reach out my hand, he pleaded, “Please take it.” I took it from him. “What happened back there in the cafeteria?” I shrugged. Ben opened up his ice cream sandwich and took a bite, chewed and swallowed. “Come on man. What happened?”

I opened my own ice cream sandwich and took a bite as I tried to think about what I was going to say. There was no way around it. I was going to have

to tell him. "When you got up, everyone was saying how you were flirting with me." Ben was chewing another bite he'd taken and looking intently at me. I continued, "I didn't know what to say. I panicked and left."

Ben's response threw me off guard. "I was flirting with you. So what? We do that kind of crap all the time. It's no big deal."

"Well, now that I left like some little bitch, people are going to assume something is going on between us."

Ben had taken another bite and spoke with his mouth full. "Let them."

"Let them?" I was flabbergasted.

"I don't care what they think. Something *is* going on between us." He emphasized the word "is".

"What do you mean?"

He put his hands on my shoulders, to make sure we were face-to-face. "Come on, Solo." He kept his eyes on me. "You mean nothing is going on between us?" I shrugged. He said, "I like what is happening with us."

I insisted, "We are just playing around."

"It might have started out that way. Come on, Solo. We've been doing quite a bit more than goofing around." His face was serious.

I gave his comment some thought. He was right. There was no way of denying that. Not that I wanted to. Deep down, I think I knew all along. It was obvious that we were both enjoying doing stuff together that went well beyond friendship. Sure we started out joking around, when we were alone and then at times to get a reaction out of others. I analyzed the moment in the cafeteria in my head. When Ben had asked me if he could get me anything, I told him that I was good, but honestly, I was hoping he would come back with something. He always asked me if I wanted anything.

I did not need to say a word. My face must have given Ben the response he was looking for. He grinned. He took his hands from my shoulders and put them under my arms, holding me.

I asked, "What is going on with us?"

"I'm not sure." He did not break eye contact. Ben smiled sheepishly. "I like you, Solomon. I've never felt this way about a guy before. I mean, I really like you, a lot."

I was so glad to hear Ben say that. I sputtered over my own words. “I have never felt this way about anybody before. I mean ever.” I took a deep breath. “Ben, I like you a lot too.”

We each moved our faces closer together until our lips touched and we kissed.

The End

Author Bio

Author of novels and short stories. Jayson James graduated from Western Washington University with a bachelor's degree in education. He was born and raised in Washington State, where he currently lives and teaches. Jayson's interests beyond writing include reading a variety of books, watching movies and drawing.

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