

# LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

## TORN

Angela Maye

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# Love's Landscapes

*An M/M Romance series*

## TORN

**By Angela Maye**

### 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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# TORN

By Angela Maye

## Photo Description

Two young men outside in a secluded location, both naked and totally lost in each other. One sitting and gazing up at his lover who bends down over him for a kiss, his hand lovingly trailing down his chest.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*That long hot summer we had run away together as often as we dared to the hidden gorge lake. After a swim, we would wrap ourselves in each other's arms, finally able to be with each other without the fear of discovery. Little did we know, that particular afternoon would be a last brief shining moment for us. As I bent down to kiss him, his tanned, lithe body so warm under my hand, we never knew that someone else had discovered our meeting place. Now we had to decide, lie about what we meant to each other and part ways forever or face down the coming storm together.*

*Thank you!*

*Sammy Goode*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** coming of age, friends to lovers, first time, coming out, homophobia, family issues

**Word Count:** 23,078

**TORN**  
**By Angela Maye**

## Chapter 1

God, his life was shit. He stared around the field at the people he'd known practically his whole life. The same boys he'd hung with in kindergarten who acted now almost as they had back then. All playing football as if it was the most important thing in the universe. It wasn't, it was a game. A thought that if spoken aloud would have them looking at him in horror. Thank God there were only a few weeks left of school, then off to college.

His shoulders slumped even more. Not even that brightened his mood. No, he wouldn't be going *off* anywhere, his father had seen to that. He turned toward the changing rooms, his chest tightening. Air seemed very difficult to come by when he thought of his neatly set out future. All planned for him by his father, who of course was only doing it for his own good and the good of the family. Yeah right. He just wanted his family close by so he could keep controlling them, like he had his whole life.

Dane squeezed his eyes shut, it all playing out in front of him like a movie he'd seen a hundred times. College locally in Boulder so there was no need to leave home—of course. Working part time at the family printing business to learn the ropes, then coming in at management level when he got his business degree. He shuddered. He didn't want this, but he also didn't seem to have the strength to stand up to his father either.

His older brother had gone into the business quite happily with no complaint. He wasn't management material and had gone in at a lower level but appeared happy enough. Both he and his father were very alike, certainly coming from the same mold. Their likes, dislikes and extreme prejudices seemed to match perfectly. Something Dane had never been able to fit in with. His thought processes were often the polar opposites to the pair of them. This was one of the reasons why he thought his father tried to control him. He couldn't control his opinions or beliefs so he tried to control his life instead.

Dane had impulsively done one small act of rebellion earlier this year. He'd secretly applied to the University of San Francisco at the same time as applying to Boulder. Not that he truly thought he'd go there, but it had for a short time made him feel better. He'd been accepted too, depending on his grades, just like Boulder. It was that small, little possibility of escape that kept him going. But again he didn't really believe he'd take it. The pull that his father exerted was still too strong.

He glanced around looking toward the stands and saw that boy staring at him again. It was weird that he was there every day. His head stuck in a book most of the time. Dane hadn't failed to notice though that he stared at him a lot. Even though he tried to hide it like he was doing now, hiding behind that book of his. It was just him though. He didn't seem interested in the rest of the team. Good thing too, because if they'd caught him staring he'd have been sporting a black eye long ago—their mentality.

Dane didn't really mind the attention—the boy intrigued him. He knew they were in the same year, but they didn't share any of the same classes. He also didn't seem to have any friends, always sitting alone. Dane studied him for a moment. Dark hair falling in his eyes, a geeky look about him and innocence radiating off him in waves. What was his story and why was he so fixated on Dane? He was nothing special, looking like nearly every other member of the team. Blond, sporty, the typical jock.

Only he wasn't. Inside he was different. It was that difference that was strangling him from the inside, trying to get out. But he had to stick to a certain mold, a stereotype in order to fit in. For a quiet life, he stayed in this role, but slowly it was killing him and he didn't have a clue what to do about it. With a heavy sigh, he turned away from the stands and walked inside.

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Oh God, he'd caught him looking. How mortifying was that. Sean's cheeks still felt heated. He really needed to stop staring at this guy. It was going to end up with him getting his face bashed in one of these days. He'd managed to get through the majority of the school year as planned, keeping his head down and focusing on his school work. In a couple of weeks, he'd be free of school, and as he was already eighteen he'd also be free of the dreaded foster care system. He could go out into the world and do whatever he wanted. He smiled—he would follow his plan. But he really needed to stay out of trouble until then. Maybe he should find somewhere else to sit. He liked it here though; people left him alone. He'd just have to stop staring at Dane—easier said than done.

He'd picked up on his name since he'd been spending time here, and for some reason the boy fascinated him. On the surface, he appeared like all the rest of them—a jock, for want of a better word. But there was a sadness to him at times, an uncomfortable set to his shoulders. It had been there when he looked at him just now. It was odd as he appeared to fit in with them all. But Sean couldn't help feeling it was a mask, a facade. He shook himself. Hell,



what did he know? He was no psychologist. It was probably just his imagination taking over again like it often did, with him living in his head most of the time.

He'd just have to focus on not staring before anyone else noticed. He obviously hadn't been as subtle as he thought he'd been. Good job he had no ambitions to be a spy. Anyway he needed to continue to keep a low profile. He may know he was gay, but he didn't want anyone here finding out. Not when every kid around here was either a jock or macho in some way. A rainbow-accepting school, this certainly wasn't. He gathered his things and slung his bag over his shoulder, then started the walk home to a place with equally narrow-minded people. He could never show the real him there either. No wonder he lived in his head.

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A week later Dane was having a particularly irritating day with those around him, when after practice his common sense finally snapped. He found himself marching over to his audience of one and stopped in front of him. Wide eyes stared up at him. "Right, I've had a shit day and I feel the need to vent about it. You seem interested as you've been staring at me all year." His eyes sharpened. "And don't try and deny it." The boy's mouth opened and shut, but he wisely didn't argue. "So do you want to get out of here?"

The boy stared at him strangely for a second, then shrugged. "Okay." He gathered his things and stood.

"That's my car over there." He pointed it out. "Wait for me there and I'll just go and grab my stuff." He turned and marched across the now empty field towards the changing rooms. Not bothering to waste time with a shower, he just grabbed his bag and headed towards his car. As he neared his old Nissan, he noticed the guy waiting next to the passenger door, shuffling his feet. He hesitated. What was he doing? This was so not like him. He quickened his pace and gave a small smile. "Don't worry I don't bite. What's your name?"

"Sean." He gave a shy smile.

"I'm Dane." He smirked. "Though you probably already know that." Sean blushed, and Dane immediately felt like a right shit. "Sorry. I won't take my bad mood out on you anymore, promise. Let's get out of here." He unlocked the door and put his bag in the back as Sean got in. Shaking his head at himself, he got in and started the car.

“Where are we going?” There was a slightly anxious look in Sean’s eyes.

Dane thought for a moment. He needed fresh air and space. His favorite place instantly came to mind. “There’s a place I go to get away from everything. It’s in the hills just outside town, about half an hours’ drive, then a short walk to get there. It’s really nice, there’s a lake where I swim sometimes.” God, he hoped Sean didn’t think him weird, or some sort of axe-murderer wanting to take him into the mountains. But he just smiled.

“That sounds really nice. I haven’t really got out of town since I got here a year ago. I’d love to see the mountains.” He smiled again, his eyes bright.

Dane started to relax. Maybe he had judged this right after all. Without second guessing himself, he drove out of the school and headed towards the mountains. “Do you have a time you have to be home?” Dane thought he’d better check, didn’t want to get the guy in trouble.

“No, they don’t really notice if I’m there or not.” A neutral tone to his voice.

Dane raised his eyebrows. “Your parents?”

“Foster parents.” No further explanation was given so Dane dropped it.

“I’ve got to be back by seven. Family dinner time.” He rolled his eyes. “We’re supposed to bond and share our day. What a crock.”

They stared at each other and smiled. He thought he saw understanding in Sean’s eyes. Dane felt as if he could breathe at last. His chest had been tight all day, and now the fist that felt like it was gripping him started to loosen. Maybe he could talk to this guy. Release some of the tension that had been building for weeks.

They arrived at the clearing where he normally left the car and both got out. “It’s so beautiful up here.” Sean stared at the surrounding mountains, his voice full of wonder. He turned in circles taking it all in. His eyes had been glued to the window the whole way up here. “I can’t believe I’ve never seen this before.”

“I know, right. If you want to get away from it all, this is the place to come. You hardly ever bump into anyone else and I’ve never seen a soul in the place we’re going. I think that’s why I like it so much. I can pretend it’s my own piece of paradise.” He cringed. “God that sounded cheesy.”

Sean laughed. “Yeah, but I get what you mean. If I had a car and I knew about this place, I’d be here all the time too.”

“Come on I’ll show you the place I mean.” His eyes twinkled. “Though if you tell anyone, I’ll have to kill you.”

“Yeah, right.” Sean laughed and followed after him.

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They walked for a while in silence. Sean couldn’t stop looking around him. He honestly didn’t think he’d seen anywhere so beautiful. He’d seen the mountains from a distance of course. But to actually be up in them, be part of them, was truly magical.

Dane stopped in front of him and turned slightly. “It’s down here.” He pointed to a narrow path leading downhill between some rocky cliffs set into the side of the hill. “Be careful, it’s a bit steep.”

Sean swallowed. He just hoped he didn’t break his legs. Giving a shaky laugh he slowly followed Dane, gripping tightly to the rocky edges either side of the path. He was focusing so hard on not breaking his neck, his eyes glued to the path in front of him, that he wasn’t paying attention to anything around him.

“So what do you think?”

He looked up, realizing that he’d reached the bottom. “Oh my God.” Momentarily stunned he couldn’t find any other words.

Dane laughed. “Nice right?”

“Nice? Nice doesn’t even begin to describe it.” He looked around at the pinkish grey-cliffs leading down to a beautiful tranquil lake, the color pure turquoise. It appeared to be an old quarry which had gone back to nature and been reclaimed by the mountain. There were plants and flowers growing everywhere, in every available crack and crevice. Also, the gravelly beach type area had patches of greenery. He heard trickling water and found streams going off in several different directions, creating a wonderful soundtrack to go with the spectacular surroundings. No wonder Dane called this his “piece of paradise”. It was. Sean just smiled at him, feeling so privileged to have this special place shared with him.

“Come on, let’s go and sit down.” Dane obviously was able to tell how overwhelmed Sean was. He followed him to the edge of the lake, his head constantly turning and taking everything in. Dane sat down and removed his shoes and socks, Sean doing the same. When they both placed their feet in the water and sighed almost simultaneously, Sean laughed. This situation was so

bizarre. They sat in silence, both leaning back on their elbows. It was a comfortable silence, companionable, which was strange considering they didn't really know each other.

Eventually, Sean bit the bullet and asked the question he hoped wouldn't spoil things. "So what did you want to vent about?" His voice sounded hesitant. "And why me?"

Dane gave a small laugh. "I'm sorry about that. You must have thought I was nuts storming over to you like that."

Sean laughed. "Well, it did shock me a bit, it was the last thing I expected. So what's wrong?" He forced himself to look Dane in the eye.

With a huge sigh, Dane closed his eyes. "You really don't want to hear about my problems."

"I might not have the answers you're looking for, but I can listen. If that's what you want?"

Dane opened his eyes and searched Sean's face for a second. "Yeah?" A hint of desperation in his eyes.

Sean felt a tug in his gut. "I won't judge you. My own life is screwed up enough so I'm in no position to judge yours."

After a moment's hesitation, Dane lay back and closed his eyes. "It's my father..."

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Dane proceeded to explain about how trapped he felt and how impossible it always was to stand up to his father. How all he wanted was to make his own decisions about his future, but had no idea how to stand against him without causing a major family upset. He also told him about applying to San Francisco. Once he'd started talking, he found he couldn't stop and went on to open up about how frustrated he was that he couldn't be himself around his family and friends. That now that he'd taken on this role of the jock, he couldn't seem to find a way out of it. Throughout all this Sean just lay there with an open and understanding look in his eyes. It made Dane want to keep going. He couldn't remember ever being able to talk like this.

"You know, I hang around with those guys, guys I've known forever, and I feel like a total outsider. But you'd never know it to look at me. I play the role so well now that I even kid myself sometimes." He laughed, but there was no

humor to it. "It's like with girls. I've been on some dates, hung out with them and even done some stuff." He blushed slightly. "But my reaction to it all is so different to the other guys."

Sean spoke for the first time in what felt like forever. "What do you mean?" A small frown on his face.

"Well, they're obsessed with girls. It's all they talk about. Me?" He shrugged. "I find it all a bit... meh. I'm not interested in the obsession of getting off with as many girls as possible."

"There's nothing wrong in that. You obviously haven't connected with the right person yet. There's no rush, you're only eighteen."

Sean's voice had a calming effect on him. He stretched out, finding himself relaxing. "Yeah, you're probably right. Anyway let's talk about something else, this is highly depressing."

He received a smile. "Okay, but before we do can I ask you something?"

Dane looked at him curiously. "Sure."

"It's not really any of my business but..." He hesitated as if unsure whether or not to continue. After a breath, he went on. "It seems to me that you're desperate to be free of this place and the constraints it puts on you. I really think you need to find a way of standing up to your dad and telling him what you want. Because if you stay here, by the sound of it, it's going to eat you alive."

Dane groaned. "I know." He stared up at the sky knowing that every word that Sean spoke was true. "It shouldn't be so hard. I mean it's not like I have to rely on him financially. I've got a trust fund for college. My grandmother—on my mother's side—set it up for me before she died." He smiled. "Personally I think she did it to piss my dad off. To take away some of that famous control. She never did like him." He laughed. "Good on her, she was the only one who ever stood up to him. My mother certainly never has. But like I said, it doesn't make it any easier to confront him about all this. I know the way he'll see it—me turning my back on the family. Rejecting the family business. He'll take it as a personal insult." He stared back up at the sky. "God, I don't know. It seems impossible whichever way I look at it." He felt a soft hand squeezing his arm. Stunned into silence, he turned to look at Sean.

"It'll be all right. You'll find a way to work it out. You have to." He gave Dane a gentle smile and squeezed his arm again.

Both that look and the touch comforted him, infusing him with a strength he hadn't felt before. Maybe he could do it, take control of his life. His new friend seemed pretty confident that he could. "Thanks Sean." They stared at each other silently for a moment before Sean let go of his arm. "Now we'll change the subject, this has been way too intense."

Sean chuckled. "Yeah. So what sort of stuff do you like doing?"

"Much better." Dane laughed and with that the intensity dissolved into a quiet companionship where they slowly began to get to know each other.

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## Chapter 2

“Hey.”

Sean looked up from the notes he'd been reading and saw Dane coming down the corridor towards him. He smiled. “Hi.” Some of the shyness he'd initially felt yesterday returning. Would they still be friends today, back in school with everyone around them? He had a feeling Dane's friends wouldn't approve. Pushing that aside, he forced himself to relax as Dane reached him. “Feeling better today?”

Dane laughed. “Yeah, thanks to you. I haven't talked like that ever, I don't think. It felt good.”

A warm feeling spread through Sean. “Good, glad to help.”

“So what are you up to?”

Sean sighed. “Oh, just reading through some notes for my last exam tomorrow.”

“Need any help? I've finished all mine. I'm just killing time now being here. Gonna be home enough over the holidays.”

Sean smiled, immediately understanding. “Well, I could do with someone to test me. Though I'd understand if you changed your mind. The history of art doesn't strike me as your type of thing.” He smirked, relaxing properly as Dane seemed in no hurry to get away from him. He'd crossed his arms and was leaning against the wall next to him.

With his eyes twinkling, Dane shook his head slowly. “For all you know it might be my favorite subject.”

“Yeah right.” He found himself smiling widely. “Well, if you're sure. Do you mind if we go and get some coffee first? It stimulates my brain cells.”

“Sure, we'll get some food too. I'm starving.” He pushed himself away from the wall. “Where do you want to go?”

“The coffee shop I work at in town does good coffee and sandwiches. We could go there, then the park opposite?”

Dane nodded. “Sounds good.” He led the way with Sean following behind, unable to keep the smile from his face. Maybe he had made a friend after all.

After firing questions at Sean for what felt like hours, Dane finally leaned back against the tree they were sitting under. "I think we both deserve a break." He stared up through the branches above him.

"Yeah, you're probably right. I don't think I can absorb anything else anyway." He rested his head on his arms as he lay on the ground in front of Dane. "If I don't know it now, I don't think I'm going to." He looked up at Dane. "Thanks for helping me." He couldn't believe Dane had sat with him for the past two hours tirelessly asking question after question from the test papers he'd given him.

He received a lazy smile. "No probs. Figured I owed you after emotionally vomiting all over you yesterday."

Sean grimaced. "Nice visuals." That had Dane laughing. Sean found himself joining in. He liked seeing him laugh. It made him seem so carefree. So different from the stressed, uptight boy who'd accosted him yesterday. "Do you want another drink?" He wanted to prolong their time together.

"Yeah, come on then. We'll go to your coffee shop." Dane got to his feet and stretched. "It was cool, had a nice atmosphere."

Sean shoved his books and papers back in his bag and joined Dane on his feet. They both smiled at each other, their eyes holding for a moment before Sean quickly looked away. In his head, he chanted "Just friends, just friends, just friends," determined not to ruin this. It was the first real friendship he'd had in years, and he wasn't going to spoil it, no matter how hot the guy was. Pushing all thoughts in that direction out of his mind, he strode purposefully towards the coffee shop.

They pushed through the door, and Sean spied a free table in the window. He gestured for Dane to take it. "Another latte?" Dane nodded and turned to go claim their table. He gave Sean the sexiest smile imaginable as he sat down. It momentarily rooted Sean to the spot, his mouth going dry. He forced a smile to his face and turned towards the counter, trying desperately to steady his hands. "Hey May," he greeted his boss.

"Hi sweetie. Back again? And with your sexy friend still in tow."

"Hush." His face heating quickly.

"Sorry hun, didn't mean to embarrass you." Her smile said otherwise. "But he is *fine*."



“May, will you behave? He’s just a friend.” He pinned her with his eyes hoping to get his point across.

“Whatever you say, sweet cheeks.” Her eyes twinkled with mischief.

He huffed. “Oh, you’re impossible.” He couldn’t really be mad at her. She always brightened his day. She was only in her midtwenties but she gave off a mothering instinct that made him feel cared about. She was always using those silly terms of endearment when she spoke to him. He secretly liked them, though he’d never tell her.

She shook her hair out of her eyes, the sun catching the blonde highlights. Her face became serious. “You deserve to be happy Sean, let yourself be.” She reached over and squeezed his hand.

He swallowed and nodded. He’d opened up about his past when he first started working here, and she’d been his unofficial cheerleader ever since. A smile formed as he stared at her. “Two lattes please,” he finally managed to order.

“Sure thing hun.” She winked at him. He shook his head the smile still in place.

He sat down opposite Dane placing their coffees in front of them. When he looked up, he found himself being studied. He frowned. “What?”

“Relax.” Dane chuckled. “I was just wondering what your story was that’s all.”

“Oh.” Sean didn’t know whether to relax or not.

“Sorry, I’m sticking my nose in. You don’t have to tell me anything.” He smiled gently.

Sean found himself smiling back. “It’s okay. I just prefer focusing on the future rather than the past, but I don’t mind sharing. You told me your story after all.” He paused, wondering where to start. The beginning he supposed. He stared at his coffee, gaining courage from not staring directly into Dane’s eyes. After taking a deep breath, he forged ahead. “My mother died from cancer five years ago.”

“Oh God, Sean, I’m sorry. Look, you don’t need to tell me any of this.”

He glanced up at Dane and gave a half smile. “No, it’s okay. Talking helps, right?”

Dane's posture relaxed slightly. "It can." He still didn't look convinced.

"Look it's all right. If I didn't want to talk to you about it, I wouldn't, so relax." Dane leaned further back in his chair and matched Sean's smile.

He took a breath. "Okay... well, after that happened we struggled on for a bit, me and Dad. Then after about six months he just started to spiral. First it was the drink, then drugs." He shuddered as memories of that time assailed him. He squeezed his eyes shut, willing them to go away.

There was a light touch to the top of his hand as it rested on the table in front of him. He opened his eyes and looked down to see Dane's fingers stroking over his own. It gave him the strength to continue. Taking a deep breath, he looked back up at Dane. Those kind brown eyes just drew him in, encouraging him on.

"He got arrested a few times and just got cautioned, but then last year they finally threw the book at him. Landing Dad in jail and me in foster care. I was moved from Denver and placed here." He stared out of the window, becoming quiet. After a minute or so he continued, urged on by a squeeze to his hand. "I don't really mind it here, was never really that keen on Denver, especially after the trouble started with Dad. My so-called friends disappeared into the woodwork when gossip spread about the arrests. Their parents' influence no doubt." He shrugged. "I mean who wants their kid hanging out with a druggie's son." He felt his hand squeezed again and looked back at Dane.

"So, that is my sorry story. Thank God I'm eighteen, and after tomorrow, I'll finally be in charge of my own life." His face brightened. "No more school, and I can focus on my plan." His smile widened.

Dane tilted his head. "Plan?" He sat back in his chair, his hand going with him.

Sean pulled his own hand back, missing the comforting touch already. "Well, I can't afford to go to college properly so I've had to make a plan."

"And?" The word stretched out. Dane grinning back at him. "You gonna tell me or is it some big secret?"

Sean laughed. "It's a three point plan. One, move somewhere and rent my own place—no matter how small. Two, get a job, but that should probably be number one. Three, night classes in art or photography." He stretched his arms out. "Simple."

Dane laughed. "You've got it all planned."

"Yep. The only problem is... I have no idea where to go."

They both stared at each other then burst out laughing. "Yeah, that might be a bit of a problem," Dane sniggered.

"Yeah." Sean grinned. "But I'll figure it out. They said I could stay living with them over the summer, so I can work here and earn some extra money. May's throwing as many shifts my way that she can." He glanced over at her. "She knows about the plan. The foster parents could do with taking a leaf out of her book when it comes to being supportive. Indifference seems to be their motto. As long as they receive the money from the state they're happy. I'm surprised they're letting me stay as long as they are."

He shrugged and looked back at Dane. "Maybe they've developed a conscience after all. Who knows?" He tilted his head. "You're right you know, talking does help." They held each other's gaze, again for longer than necessary. This time it was Dane who looked away. Sean cleared his throat and decided he needed to get out of there before he did something stupid. He was starting to read more into things than he really should.

"I guess I should go home and do a bit more studying before tomorrow. No point planning a future in Art if I fail the exam." He laughed nervously.

"Yeah, you're probably right." Dane couldn't seem to meet his eyes.

Nerves crept over Sean. He hoped Dane hadn't picked up on his stupid crush. That would be the fastest way to lose his friend. Straight guys weren't known to appreciate gay guys mooning all over them. He stood and made his way towards the door, waving to May on the way out.

When they were both outside, he turned to smile at Dane. "Thanks again for helping me today."

"I told you, it's no problem." His eyes now meeting Sean's with no difficulty. "There is something you can do in return though." A mischievous twinkle now stared back at him.

"What?" The hairs rising on his arms.

"Can you swim?" It was such an innocent question, but that twinkle brought wickedness to mind.

"Of course I can swim." He frowned, then it hit him. "Oh no! You want me to swim in that lake, don't you?" The question was greeted with a huge smile.

Sean shook his head. "Dipping my toes is one thing, but dunking my whole body? Oh no. It'll be freezing." His head still shaking.

"You big wuss." A look filled with amusement met his own horror-struck face.

He scrambled for an alternative. "What about the swimming pool?"

This suggestion was met with a slow shake of the head and twitching lips. "Nope, I've been craving a swim for days and I don't want to be surrounded by noise and kids."

"Oh Dane... man... I..." He stared helplessly back knowing he couldn't refuse him. "Oh okay." He pouted, shivering just thinking about it.

Dane laughed in triumph. "Yes! You'll love it."

"Yeah, if you say so," he grumbled.

"You liked it there, didn't you?" Dane's smug expression still in place.

"On dry land," he emphasized glaring back. "Are you sure you wouldn't prefer hanging with your other friends? You must be missing them a bit."

"No not at all." His face became serious. "I told you how I feel when I'm around them. The last two days have been a refreshing change. You're good company, Sean."

"Thanks." His cheeks reddened, but he couldn't stop the smile from forming. "Okay." His resistance gone. "I'll go swimming."

"Of course you will. Never doubted it for a second. Come on I'll give you a lift home." He started walking then turned back towards Sean and winked. "Don't forget your trunks tomorrow, will you? I wouldn't want to have to make you skinny dip."

Sean turned scarlet, and Dane cracked up, chuckling practically the whole way back to the car. He followed, shaking his head. What had he let himself in for?

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Several hours later Dane sat at the dinner table finishing his dessert. He looked up when his father cleared his throat.

"So who was that boy you were with today? He's not one of the usual crowd."

Dane stiffened, placing his spoon down. "Have you been watching me?"

"No!" His father's voice was sharp. "I've got far more important things to do with my day. Your brother saw you. What are you hanging out with some geeky kid for? You've got friends, you don't need to stoop to picking up strays. This family's got standards."

Dane's fists clenched tightly, and he glared at his father. The room felt as if it were closing in on him. It was never going to stop, was it? His father's need for control was going to end up crippling him. In the end, it would destroy him, and the person he really was would disappear completely. Enough. No more. It stops now.

He took a breath, his eyes fixed on his father's, and he began to speak slowly and clearly. "Who I spend my time with is none of your business." He stood and stared down at his father, whose mouth was beginning to open as if to reply. Dane cut him off. "I control my own life and that includes choosing my own friends." He looked over at his brother with the same piercing look in his eye. "Stop following me." With that, he turned, and with his back straight and head held high, he walked to his room, shutting the door with a bang.

He couldn't help the slight smile as he thought of his father's gaping mouth as he'd walked away. His smile widened. Well, it was a start. All he had to do now was find the balls to tell him about San Francisco. There was no way he was going to stay here in Boulder. It would finish him. Sean was right. It had taken an outsider's objectivity to give him the kick in the ass he needed.

Thinking back on the last few days, he realized that he'd felt more himself and more relaxed than he had in years. He was convinced it was Sean's influence who had caused him to stand up to his father tonight. Releasing all his pent up frustrations the other day had somehow broken the vicious circle he'd found himself in.

There was going to be no more kowtowing to his father. This was the start of the real him making a stand. Though he wasn't about to kid himself it was going to be easy, his father was a very stubborn and determined man, after all. He smiled. Maybe it was in the genes, because he could feel the determination growing in him. A strength that until now he hadn't been able to grip onto. He would make the future he wanted happen. There was no going back now. He'd build on this and find some way of telling his father about his plans.

Dane spent the rest of the night in his room watching television and surfing the web. He was getting ready for bed when his phone beeped. He looked down

to see it was a text from Sean. They'd swapped numbers when he'd dropped him off earlier. He smiled as he opened the text, his mood lightening.

*Thanks for today. Feel much better about the exam now.*

Dane lay on his bed and texted back.

*Glad to help. Text me after the exam I'll pick you up. PS Don't forget your trunks LOL.*

The phone beeped again.

*Ha Ha.*

Dane chuckled. He stared at the ceiling and pondered his reaction to Sean over the last few days. He was a genuinely nice guy with no artifice to him at all. He had a quiet manner but didn't seem afraid to speak his mind. There was also a deep-rooted determination to achieve the future he wanted, no matter how long it took or how hard he had to work for it. He wasn't going to let his past or present situation hold him back. Dane admired that.

With his mind still on Sean, he got ready for bed, laughing to himself at his reaction to swimming in the lake. He seemed to have a delicate precious side to him that vastly contrasted to the macho jocks he usually spent time with. They'd never admit to not liking cold water. He found himself smiling again. He'd certainly been doing a lot of that lately. Shaking his head, he walked into the bathroom.

The following afternoon Dane's phone beeped, informing him of a text from Sean.

*Exam over. Yay! Ready for swimming. Not so yay.*

Dane texted back, his lips twitching.

*Be there in 20. You're such a baby—precious.*

*I am NOT precious.*

*Oh you soooo are! Be there soon.*

*Not funny jock boy.*

*I'll dunk you for that. I'm on my way.*

*Shaking in fear!!!*

Dane laughed out loud. He grabbed his car keys and headed out. There was no one home so he didn't have to explain himself to anyone. It was a good day.

He was off to his favorite place with someone who was fast becoming his favorite person. Strange considering he'd only really known the guy for three days. He shrugged, not prepared to analyze it too much. It felt good so he was going with it for once.

As he neared the corner where he was to pick Sean up, he felt butterflies in his stomach. What the hell? Rolling his eyes, he took a firmer hold of the wheel, telling himself to "get a grip". He wasn't nervous so what was with the butterflies? Man he was complex lately.

He pulled up in front of Sean, who gave a small wave and got in next to him. The fluttering in his stomach immediately began to ease, Sean's smile settling him. He grinned back, the urge to tease overwhelming.

"So precious, ready for a dip?"

Sean crossed his arms and frowned at him. "You are not going to start calling me that."

"Or what?" Dane tried hopelessly to keep a straight face.

"Or..." He floundered; the frown turning into a glare. "I'll find something far worse than jock boy to call you."

"Name calling?" He gave a mock frown. "Shocking."

"Don't test me." His lips now twitching and those green eyes twinkling beneath the disapproving look. "Appearances can be deceptive."

They both laughed after trying to out-stare each other. Dane pulled out into traffic, his heart light and a smile plastered over his face.

They arrived at the mountain and headed towards the lake, talking and joking around like old friends. Dane couldn't believe how easy it was to just be himself. They clambered down into the gorge, Sean warily eyeing the water.

"It looks cold," he grumbled. Dane laughed and pulled him along.

After laying their towels down near the water's edge, Sean stood and looked around, appearing just as enamored with the place as last time. Dane decided he needed some friendly encouragement to get his mind back on the concept of swimming.

"Right, come on princess, you're going in."

Sean turned to him, his hands on his hips and eyebrows raised. "Precious? Now princess. Do I look like a girl?" He looked as if he was about to start tapping his foot.

Dane stood there grinning at him, totally unrepentant. He smirked. “No, you don’t *look* like a girl.”

Sean opened his mouth as if to argue, but then huffed loudly instead. “Fine, after you.” He gestured for Dane to go first.

Feeling smug, Dane pulled off his shirt and kicked off his shoes. He already wore his swim shorts, with a spare pair in the bag he’d brought. He stood there looking expectantly at Sean, who rolled his eyes and huffed again. After a moment’s hesitation, he pulled off his shirt exposing his completely smooth and slightly pale chest.

Dane froze. His mouth went dry, a feeling of complete panic filling him. His dick was getting hard. What. The. Fuck?

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### Chapter 3

Sean frowned. Dane had gone still as a statue and was staring at him with an expression that could only be placed somewhere between shock and horror. He fidgeted in place, not really knowing what to do.

“Uh Dane, are you okay?”

His voice must have shocked him back to reality as he found himself staring at an obviously fake smile. “Yeah yeah... sure... come on, let's go in.” Without waiting for Sean to reply, he turned and ran into the lake.

Sean stood on the water's edge staring after Dane with his mind in a whirl. Had he done something to make him react like that? Oh God, maybe he'd finally noticed Sean's wholly inappropriate crush. Maybe his eyes had given him away when Dane had removed his top. His dick had definitely twitched. He'd been forcing himself to think of toilets and garbage cans to keep his erection at bay. It had worked too, so that couldn't be it. But his eyes could have given the game away. Perhaps they'd lingered too long on that muscular chest and damn, those nipples had been calling to him.

He felt his groin coming to life again and quickly forced his mind away from his fantasies. Being a virgin in all things sexual was not helping with his control. If he'd had some experience he probably wouldn't be acting like the horny, frustrated teen he was. Although maybe not. Dane was enough to challenge anyone's control.

He squared his shoulders and made his way into the water, determined not to screw this up. Pushing all horny thoughts to the back of his mind, he vowed to make up for his lapse in judgement and prove himself a worthy friend.

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Dane swam out as far as he could, trying desperately to clear his mind. It wasn't working. All he could think about was his reaction when Sean had removed his shirt. He'd never responded that way to another guy before. He wasn't gay, was he? The girls he'd been with had never quite done it for him, he knew that. He'd never analyzed it too much, thinking they just hadn't been the right match.

Although he couldn't deny having the odd stray thought over the years, wondering if he were gay. His obvious lack of enthusiasm with girls was

something he couldn't really ignore. Not with everyone around him raving about girls and sex. Though his musings had never deepened due to the fact that he'd never had any sexual feelings towards any boys or men before.

Now he couldn't avoid thinking about it. You weren't supposed to get a hard-on for your friends. So was Sean a friend or something more? Was Sean even gay? He shook his head. This was all too much to think about at once. He needed to focus on his own feelings first before worrying about Sean's. Figure out which side of the fence he stood on.

He turned around and looked at Sean paddling at the water's edge, a smile formed naturally. He really did like this guy. He was comical even though he didn't really mean to be. Dane studied him. His hair was falling in his eyes, and he had a determined look on his face, obviously trying to prove he was man enough for the cold water. He chuckled—the guy was adorable.

Huh? That gave him pause. He'd never thought of any guy as adorable before. Okay time for a test. He let his eyes wander of their own accord, taking in Sean's delicate, slim frame. Despite the cold water, he felt movement in his shorts. A tingling in his groin spreading quickly. Yep, his dick was getting hard again. He looked away, taking deep breaths. Okay, so probably not totally straight then. If straight at all. He frowned. Shouldn't he be more traumatized by this revelation? His stomach was full of butterflies, but not in a particularly bad way.

Perhaps he'd always known but had never accepted the truth before. Something else about the real him that he'd kept hidden—even from himself. He looked back toward Sean, who was now in up to his waist. He smiled and shook his head. The guy really needed to be dunked. Right, enough analyzing. There'd be plenty of time for that later, when his brain could try to make sense of all this. He'd come here to have some fun and that's what he was going to do. The heavy stuff could wait.

What he did know though was that he was done hiding from himself. Having the freedom over the last few days to let the real him come out had released something in him. It was time to grow some balls and be the person he wanted to be. If that person happened to be gay... well, he'd find a way to deal. Who knew if anything would happen with Sean anyway? He wasn't going to push it. He'd just have to make his dick behave while he figured a few things out.

With his head a lot clearer and those butterflies settling, he swam towards Sean, making quick work of the distance between them.

“Come on Princess, time we got you wet.” Before Sean could say or do anything, Dane delivered a huge splash in his direction. With Sean standing there spluttering in outrage, Dane delivered two more splashes, leaving Sean soaked with water dripping down his face and body.

“You total shit.” His fists clenched at his sides.

“What? You looked like you needed a hand. It’s taken forever for you to get in this far, I’m just speeding up the process.”

“Oh really. Just providing a helpful service are you?”

Dane smirked. “Yep, free of charge.”

“Uh huh.” Sean’s eyes glinted, causing Dane to slowly back away.

“Now Sean...”

He lunged at Dane, pushing him over and under, leaving Dane gasping and laughing as he came to the surface. “Oh, you’re in for it now.” He lunged back at Sean, who leaped out of the way with an unmanly squeak. Dane laughed and lunged again.

They spent the next few hours alternately messing around in the water and lying on their towels getting their breath back and talking. It was the most fun Dane could remember having, and he was determined he wasn’t going to spoil this, no matter what crazy feelings were going through his mind and body.

They’d been lying there for a while, letting the sun dry them off, when Dane’s mind drifted to Sean’s plans for the future. He nudged him. “Had any more thoughts of where you’re going to go after the summer?”

“Yeah.” He smiled, turning onto his side and leaning up on an elbow. “You’ve given me a few ideas actually.”

“Me?” He frowned, not remembering saying anything that might have influenced him.

Sean stared back with a slightly sheepish expression. “Well, I’d been thinking about somewhere along the West Coast anyway.” He smiled. “I love the sea. Then you mentioned San Francisco. I’d been more focused in my mind on LA, but it got me thinking so I did a bit of research online.” His smile widened. “The college looks good, I can see why you chose it. They’ve got a big art department and you can do evening and online courses. They’ve also got a financial aid program, which is the best I’ve seen. The photography course I’ve found looks amazing.”

Dane laughed, loving Sean's enthusiasm. His whole face had lit up as he'd talked. "Take a breath. I'm glad I could help."

Sean beamed. "You have. I've already made inquiries about the finance side of things, just waiting to hear back. I think I've more or less decided now, so thanks. I meant to say it earlier, but I got distracted."

"Yeah, today's been fun," Dane laughed. "Your face when I splashed you." He sniggered. "Classic."

"Hmm, I'll get you back for that." His eyes calculating.

"Yeah right, course you will." Sean shoved his arm grinning good-naturedly. He shoved back grinning widely, thoroughly enjoying his time with Sean. "What are you up to this weekend?"

"I'm working eight to six both days." He lay back down and stretched, then twisted to face Dane. "May's giving me as many hours as she can. I'll be doing every weekend and about three days in the week."

Dane nodded. "Want to hang out in between?"

"Sure." His eyes twinkled. "You're not bad company... for a jock." He scrambled out of the way, giggling as Dane leaped at him. "Now now, pick on someone your own size." The giggles increasing as he tried to dodge Dane's attempts to grab him.

Dane quickly outmaneuvered him, grabbing him and throwing him over his shoulder. He ran towards the water with Sean shouting out and kicking his legs, his fists pummeling Dane where he could.

"Put! Me! Down!"

"Nope." Dane continued towards the water, totally undeterred. "You've earned a dunking, precious."

"Don't call me precious!"

"Don't call me jock boy!" Dane smiled widely as they neared the water, and he felt Sean grab on for dear life.

"Dane, don't you dare!" He dangled precariously over the water, clinging on like an upside-down monkey.

"Well?" Dane stood knee deep in the water, a broad grin on his face. Sean stubbornly said nothing, just continuing to cling to him. "Okay then." He loosened his grip on Sean, who shrieked.

“Okay, okay, okay. I won’t call you jock boy.” He huffed loudly. “But you’re not to call me precious either.”

“Deal.” He turned around, his face smug, and headed back to dry land.

“Now put me down, you big macho idiot.”

Dane chuckled and plonked Sean on his feet, taking off out of his reach. He stood next to his towel and watched Sean slowly walking back towards him with vengeance in his eyes.

He glared at Dane. “I’m making a list you know.”

He raised his eyebrows. “A list?”

“Yeah. A payback list.”

“Bring it on.” He tried and failed to keep the smile from his face.

“I will.” Sean managed to keep a straight face for all of thirty seconds then dissolved into laughter. “You’re a dick.”

Dane winked. “I know.” He glanced at his watch. “Come on, we better get out of here, it’s after six. I’ve got to report for dinner duty at seven.” He rolled his eyes, and Sean sniggered. They grabbed their stuff and headed back to the car, pushing and shoving each other along the way. When Dane dropped Sean off and drove away, he felt a sinking feeling in his gut. He sighed. God, he had a lot to think about.

Later that night he lay on his bed in the darkness trying to figure out the mess in his head. If he was gay, that would just be one more thing for his father to hold against him. Why did this have to happen now? He had enough to deal with already. Sean Daniels had a lot to answer for.

Who was he kidding? Just saying his name made him smile. Today had been amazing. For some reason, Sean made him relax and brought out the fun side of his character. But what was with his dick’s reaction to him? He’d thought, at first, maybe it was a fluke, a one-off dick malfunction. But no, it had happened several times throughout the day. Usually when Sean’s body had brushed against his.

Picking him up probably hadn’t been the best idea. With his body plastered to Dane’s back, his dick had thought it was Christmas. He’d had to quickly shut that down before he’d faced Sean again.

Why all of this wasn’t scaring the shit out of him, he didn’t know. Surely he should be in mega-angst mode by now. But the main thing that was bothering

him was it just added to the ways in which his father would be disappointed in him. He didn't care about his friends' reactions. Besides, they weren't real friends anyway. Three days with Sean had shown him that, and he had no inclination to spend any time with them. They'd been calling him to hang out, but so far he'd managed to put them off. He'd been quite creative in some of the excuses he'd used too. They'd figure things out soon enough, he had his own issues to worry about.

The actual fact of being gay didn't really bother him either. It certainly didn't disgust him in any way. It actually felt like a bit of a relief knowing his equipment and horniness worked as it should. Not that he'd had trouble getting it up for girls, but it had been more of an automatic reaction to being touched. There'd been no excitement to go with it, and he'd always been left less than satisfied.

Just looking at Sean's bare chest today had created more of a physical reaction than full sex with a girl had. He'd felt desire for the first time. That appeared to answer the question for him. Was he gay? He tried another experiment by closing his eyes and bringing Sean to mind. Bare chest, dripping wet, twinkling green eyes. His shorts began to tent. He shook his head and opened his eyes. Yeah, definitely gay.

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Sean had never been happier, not for as long as he could remember. He walked back behind the counter, dumped the dirty cups in the sink and turned to serve a customer. After taking the order, he set about making the lattes, the most popular drink here. He'd spent the last ten days in a haze of work, enjoying the time with May despite her mercilessly teasing him about Dane. That brought a smile to his face. All his free time had been spent with his new friend. With school and graduation now behind them, their time was their own. They'd gone to the lake several times, just hung out around town and even been to the movies. Seemed they had the same taste in films, Dane having a secret superhero obsession too.

They were meeting up later when Sean finished his shift. They'd arranged to go swimming again. The fresh air of the mountains would be good after the smell of coffee all day long. He'd grown to love their trips to the lake, his companion not the only reason. It was so tranquil up there. The rugged beauty of the place and open spaces inspired him.

He'd started taking his camera along and constantly slowed their progress by stopping to take pictures of a flower, an unusual tree, or just the vast

mountains all around. Dane teased him about it, but he also encouraged him, pointing out things he thought might interest Sean. They'd grown incredibly close in the short time they'd known each other, often confiding in each other about their fears for the future.

Dane still hadn't found a way to tell his father he was leaving. At first Sean had thought Dane might be angry that he was planning to go to San Francisco too, but he seemed thrilled with the idea. Happy he'd have a ready-made friend there. That suited Sean too as their friendship had become incredibly important to him. His relationship with the foster parents remained frosty, and there was really no point in trying to change that now.

There were three weeks until he had to leave. The thought both thrilled and terrified him. His fear was damped down by the knowledge that he'd have a friend nearby, though it still felt like jumping into the unknown without a safety net. He was alone really. No mother, father in prison, and no other family to speak of.

His father had shown no interest in staying in touch. The odd phone call they'd shared had been stilted and awkward. The letters Sean had written had all remained unanswered. It was no surprise really. In reality they'd drifted apart years ago, his father losing himself in the alcohol and drugs. Sean had learned to become very self-sufficient as a result, and this in itself had helped to protect him during his year in the foster care system.

May had helped too, being his rock when he'd needed it. This was why his friendship with Dane meant so much. Despite the fact they hadn't known each other very long, it was the closest he'd felt to anyone in years. He treasured their time together. The stupid crush was still there, but he'd managed to quash it—mostly. His groin still misbehaved whenever Dane's shirt came off. But the friendship they'd developed far outweighed the physical reaction he had and there was no way he was risking it.

It seemed to matter to Dane too, their meetups often instigated by him. He also frequently sent him funny texts and e-mails. He was quite the joker. Also, when they weren't together, Dane seemed to spend a lot of his time researching things about San Francisco. He was always giving Sean information on places to go, job opportunities and different types of accommodation available.

With Dane's help, Sean had his plan almost sewn up. Why Dane didn't spend time with his old friends anymore, Sean wasn't entirely sure, but he seemed happy. He smiled, looking forward to their swim later. He'd got over

his fear of cold water pretty quickly. Their first swim had seen to that. He felt a tingle run through him as he remembered how Dane had effortlessly picked him up. God, he'd had to fight getting hard. The threat of being dunked head first had helped though. He smiled and shook his head. His friend was a menace.

A few hours later Sean was stretched out on his towel, drying off after a swim. He didn't think he'd ever felt so relaxed, the sun deliciously warm on his skin. Dane was next to him, sitting upright, he appeared lost in thought. This was nothing new—the guy often drifted off into his own head. It didn't worry Sean. He knew Dane had a lot on his mind and he'd talk to him if he needed to.

He studied Dane a bit closer and found himself frowning. He did seem a bit more distracted than usual today. Maybe he should just check if he was okay. It wouldn't do any harm. He twisted around. "You okay, Dane?"

"What? Oh yeah."

Sean's frown deepened. Dane looked like he'd been caught doing something wrong. "What's up? You've got a funny look on your face." Dane opened his mouth, but nothing came out. Sean sat up, his eyes narrowing. "What's happened? You seemed okay earlier."

Dane cleared his throat. "Yeah, yeah I'm fine... Just got something on my mind that's all. Don't worry about it."

Sean's gut clenched. "I thought we were friends. Come on, what's wrong?"

Dane fidgeted, looking anywhere but at Sean. "Oh look... I hadn't planned to do this today."

"Do what?" Sean stared at Dane, confusion and fear battling inside him. Had he done something wrong? Upset him in some way?

Dane stared up at the sky and let out a huge sigh. He closed his eyes and when he opened them and turned to Sean there was steely determination staring back at him. "Okay then. I need to ask you something. I don't suppose I can go on like this for much longer anyway."

Sean swallowed. "What do you mean?" His voice unsteady.

"There's something I've been wondering about for a while and I really need to know."

"What?"

He stared silently at Sean, then licked his lips. "So um... Are you gay?"



## Chapter 4

Sean froze, his eyes going wide. Oh God, he knows. He stared at Dane, momentarily unable to breathe, speak, or think.

Dane must have taken pity on him because he kept talking. "You see I've been having these feelings lately... when I'm around you."

Sean forced himself to breathe. "What feelings?"

Dane started chewing his bottom lip, and he broke eye contact. "That I want to kiss you." It came out as a whisper.

Oh God oh God oh God. Did he really just say that? He had to clarify. "You want to kiss me?" His voice was equally quiet.

He nodded, his eyes slowly meeting Sean's. There was a brief silence as they both studied each other. "I know you've never said, but you've never mentioned girls and you did use to stare at me a lot." The words came out in a rush.

Sean found his breathing increasing. "I thought you were straight?"

Dane grinned sheepishly. "So did I. Then you came along and took your shirt off and bam, instant confusion."

Sean jumped to his feet. "I don't want to be your experiment." He turned away but not before noticing the hurt look in Dane's eyes.

"You're not an experiment." Dane was instantly standing behind him, stopping him with a hand on his arm.

Sean stiffened. "Then what am I?" There was silence, the only sound being their loud and rapid breathing. The hand around his arm squeezed.

"You're the boy that I've been wanting to kiss. The boy I've been touching myself over at night." Sean shuddered. The huskiness to Dane's voice and his words heating him from the inside out. Dane stepped closer, his lips next to Sean's ear. "You're the boy I want." He trembled, unable to respond.

"Am I alone in this?" Dane's voice, strained.

Sean pulled away and turned around. He slowly shook his head and raised his eyes to meet Dane's, his heart pounding in his chest.

"Thank God." Dane pulled Sean against him, crushing his lips with his own. Their mouths opened; tongues meeting in an erotic fight for control. Sean

groaned, holding on to Dane's shoulders for dear life. Dane's arm tightened around his waist, his other hand moving to cradle his head, holding him in place as he took control of the kiss. Sean held on for the ride, whimpering and moaning his pleasure.

Dane ground himself against Sean, causing him to gasp at the hardness pressing against him. The kiss stalled for a moment as he caught his breath, stunned at what they'd just done. "Wow." It came out before he could stop it.

Dane gave a slow sensual smile. "Yeah." His voice low. "Been dreaming of doing that for the past week."

Sean swallowed. "You hid it well." They still clung to each other.

"Had to, wasn't sure if you were gay. Besides, I didn't want to ruin things."

Sean laughed nervously. "Well, I guess now you know I'm gay."

A wicked smile greeted that statement. "Yeah, your tongue in my mouth kinda gave it away." Sean blushed, causing Dane to laugh, releasing the tension of the situation. "Come on, let's sit back down." He untangled himself from Sean and grabbed his hand, pulling him back down to their towels.

They sat there holding hands, neither of them seeming to be in a rush to speak. After the shock had worn off, the questions began forming in Sean's mind. He asked the most obvious one first.

"So *are* you gay? Or are you just curious?" He felt Dane stiffen next to him and hurried to continue. "I'm not trying to be a dick, I just need to know. You're my friend. I don't want to ruin that. Our friendship means a lot to me."

Dane squeezed his hand. "It means a lot to me too. That's why I waited to say anything." He frowned, looking like he was trying to get his thoughts clear in his mind. "I've thought a lot about this recently... since that first day we swam here." He shook his head. "It surprised the hell out of me."

"So you'd never..." He blushed scarlet and cleared his throat. "Never got hard for a guy before?"

Dane laughed. "No. But girls had never done much for me either, like I told you. I've had sex with a girl, but found it a bit bland." Sean wrinkled his nose making Dane laugh. "Yeah, I know, TMI, but you asked. So it's not really a big shock for me. It's not like I haven't questioned myself over the years. I've just never delved deeply into it as I've never had a stiffy for a guy before. Until you." He winked at Sean, who found himself blushing again.

Dane reached out to stroke his rosy cheek. "I like this, it's cute."

Sean rolled his eyes and shook his head, forcing himself back on topic. "I've never done anything like this before you know. It's pathetic at my age, but you're my first kiss."

Dane reached for his hand again. "It's not pathetic." He squeezed. "I'm honored to be your first." His eyes heated as he looked at Sean. Oh man, that look. His breath caught. "Kiss me again."

That sensual smile was back. "Anytime."

He pushed Sean onto his back and leaned over him. His fingers tracing his eyebrows, over his cheek and around his lips. His eyes never leaving Sean's. "Please." He'd begun to pant, the anticipation killing him.

Dane's smile widened as he rolled on top of Sean. Their bodies pressed tightly together, their arousal obvious. "You really are gorgeous." Before Sean could reply, his lips were taken in a passionate kiss.

Sean groaned in pleasure, his arms wrapping tightly around Dane. They moved against each other, the kiss intensifying. Dane let out a low animalistic sound, causing Sean to tremble, every nerve ending responding to Dane's unrestrained reaction to him. He could feel the release of pent-up frustration coming at him in waves.

Dane leaned up on his elbows breaking the kiss, his body settling between Sean's legs. No words were needed. His eyes told Sean everything. All humor was gone replaced by a burning intensity which spurred Sean on.

He grabbed Dane's head, pulling him back down to the kiss, his body matching Dane's thrust for thrust. Mewls, grunts and groans became their only form of communication as they writhed together, complete lust taking over.

Dane gripped his hair, panting into his mouth between kisses. Sean's hands explored freely, moving over his bare back and reaching into his shorts. Dane's thrusting increased at the feel of Sean's hands on his ass, making Sean's confidence grow.

He squeezed again, causing Dane to tear his lips away. "Too many clothes," he panted. "I need to feel you." He yanked his shorts down and off, doing the same to Sean's. Arousal made any embarrassment disappear as their naked bodies came together.

“Aahh, oh God.” Sean’s eyes closed at the exquisite feeling. Their throbbing cocks slid against each other, causing Sean’s whole body to stiffen. “Oh man, I’m gonna come.” A feeling of urgency overtaking him.

Dane reached between them, wrapping his hand around them both. Holding himself up on an elbow, he took Sean’s lips again. Sean thrilled at the tight fist around him.

It really didn’t take long. Sean clung to Dane as they both grunted and shuddered through their orgasm, their seed spilling between them. Dane slumped over him, his face buried in Sean’s neck while Sean lay there panting, eyes closed, feeling as if he’d melted into the ground.

“Oh God, I’ve never felt anything like that.” Dane’s voice muffled against his skin.

Sean smiled, unable to move. “Not even with girlie sex?”

“Especially not with girlie sex. I’ve never come like that in my life.” He leaned up to look at Sean. “You’re surprising, Sean Daniels.”

“What do you mean?”

He chuckled. “Well, considering you’ve never done this before, you’re certainly not shy.”

Sean flushed from his neck to the roots of his hair. “I... I’m sorry?”

Dane laughed again. “Do not apologize. I like this side of you. Sent me wild. Or couldn’t you tell?” He winked.

“Well yeah, it was a bit hard to miss.” He grinned.

“I think there’s a wicked side to you which I’m looking forward to getting to know.” His eyes twinkled at Sean.

“So does this mean...” He started chewing his lip.

Dane raised his eyebrows. “Are we doing this again? Is that what you mean?” Sean nodded. “Hell yeah.” His face softened; a gentle smile forming. “I like you Sean and not just as a friend. I’d like to see where this goes. No pressure.”

Sean smiled, his stomach fluttering. “I’d like that too.”

“Good.” He grimaced. “Now I think we need to wash off. This is getting kind of sticky.”

Sean laughed, and they separated themselves and stood up. He had a moment's embarrassment as he stood naked in front of Dane, who smirked.

"No point being embarrassed after what we just did. Come on." He grabbed Sean's hand and led him towards the lake.

He shrugged, realizing Dane was right. He'd just come all over his friend, there was really no point in feeling self-conscious now. He focused instead on the firm ass walking in front of him. A smile forming of its own accord, his mouth beginning to water. Yum. There were no other words.

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Dane couldn't believe how incredible he felt. He looked over at Sean rinsing himself off and a warm tingling filled him. It had worked out far better than expected. He'd initially been terrified when Sean had kept pushing him, demanding to know what was wrong. He certainly hadn't come here today with the intention of getting it on with the guy. But when Sean pushed him on it, those earnest eyes pleading with Dane, his resistance had failed. He'd been unable to hold back anymore.

The last ten days he'd struggled with himself on whether or not to say anything. He'd always chickened out until today. But the need he'd felt for Sean and the urge to act on those feelings inside him had just become too strong.

He smiled, remembering Sean's shock when he'd said he wanted to kiss him. It had been almost comical. The guy hadn't had a clue about how Dane was feeling, which was probably a good thing. His soul searching over the last week or so had allowed him to get things straight in his head. He'd also enjoyed just spending time with Sean and getting to know him better.

His dick, however, had been having other ideas and had repeatedly misbehaved. Dane was persistently fighting off erections so he didn't make a fool of himself. Well, that was now a thing of the past. His grin widened. Thanks to Sean's reaction his whole groin area could now have free reign. He laughed to himself. The relief that Sean felt the same was overwhelming.

He'd feared disgust or at the very least Sean pulling away from their friendship. But he'd responded to Dane with equal enthusiasm. He closed his eyes, the tingling feeling returning. When Sean's hands had gone into his shorts and squeezed his ass, it had sent him wild. The initial tentative touches becoming stronger and more confident. Dane's need for more had consumed

him. He blushed slightly as he remembered the way he'd ripped both of their shorts off, the need to feel skin on skin overwhelming him.

It had felt so foreign and so right at the same time. He'd meant it when he'd said he'd never come like that in his life. He hadn't; it had been the most intense release he'd ever experienced. He reached down into the water to feel his dick hard again. He shook his head. He'd had more erections in the past ten days than he'd had in the past year—or so it seemed.

He walked forward, feeling himself drawn towards Sean, the need to touch him again building. As he reached him, Sean jumped, appearing lost in his own thoughts. Dane wrapped his arms around him from behind, pulling him back against his chest. He smiled at Sean's whimper at feeling Dane's hard length pressing against him.

Sean's breathing stuttered. "Again?"

Dane buried his face in Sean's neck nibbling the tender skin there. "You're going to have to get used to this," he murmured. "Thinking about what we just did has got me hard as a rock."

"I can tell." He brazenly pushed his ass back into Dane, giving a little wiggle.

Dane growled. "Keep doing that and we'll be doing more than I ever dreamed today." Sean giggled and gave another cheeky little wiggle. Dane groaned; his dick throbbing like mad. "Behave." He gave a light bite to Sean's shoulder and held him tighter, keeping that sexy ass still.

Sean obviously heeded the warning as he relaxed back into Dane, leaning his head back onto his shoulder. Dane nibbled some more, resulting in more giggles from Sean. Seemed he'd found a ticklish spot. His hand moved to cup Sean's face and he took his lips in a slow and sensual kiss, taking his time to explore now that the burning intensity had eased off.

Sean turned in his arms, their lips immediately reconnecting and his hands sliding into Dane's hair. Dane's own hands moving down to lightly grip that naughty ass, taking delight in his first proper feel. He took full advantage as Sean groaned, pushing back into his hands, seeking more.

"Fuck, you're sexy." He spoke into Sean's mouth, both of them starting to pant and move against each other.

"You're going to make me come again," Sean panted out between kisses. The heat between them rising fast.

“That’s the idea.” Their erections ground against each other, causing Dane’s grip to tighten on Sean’s ass, urging him on. He was too far gone to stop now. The water swirled around them as they climaxed almost simultaneously. Their grip initially tightening before they slumped against each other, foreheads pressed together, both breathing hard.

They stood together still holding on while their breathing came under control. “Oh man you’re gonna finish me.” Dane still felt out of breath. “My legs feel like jelly.”

Sean laughed, circling Dane’s waist with both arms and leaning against him. “Can I sleep now?”

Dane chuckled. “No, not here.” He pulled him from the water back to where their towels lay. They both lay down, and Dane pulled Sean towards him into his arms. “Now you can sleep. Just a nap though, we can’t stay here that much longer it’s getting late.”

Sean snuggled in, his head on Dane’s shoulder. “Just a little snooze.”

“Yeah okay.” It sounded like a good idea after all that exertion. He smiled. Well, worth it though. Pulling Sean tighter against him, he settled in and found himself drifting off.

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## Chapter 5

Dane sat bolt upright, disorientated. Where the hell was he? It was pitch black, and he was freezing. He shivered. Why on earth was he naked? He felt movement next to him, and it all came flooding back. Sean. What they'd done. He smiled, feeling warm inside despite his shivering body.

Then reality set in. Fuck. The old man was going to go mad. He had no idea what the time was or how long they'd slept. He gently shook Sean, who just groaned and turned away from him. Dane rolled his eyes. Someone liked their sleep. He tried again, this time more firmly.

"Sean, wake up."

"Huh? Where are we?"

Dane grinned. "We're still at the lake. This is all your fault, you know."

Sean sat up and moved closer to him, his skin icy cold. "How'd you figure that? You slept too. Jeez, it's freezing. Where's our clothes?"

"I dunno, hang on." He scrambled around searching for his bag, eventually finding it a few feet behind them. He felt inside for his phone. "We can use this as a flashlight." He switched it on and began looking for their discarded clothes, not having paid much attention to where he'd flung them earlier.

It took a while to find everything, the phone not giving out much light. They hurriedly got dressed and put away their towels, Sean getting his own phone out to help in the light department. Even with that they could barely see a few feet in front of them.

Dane grabbed Sean's hand pulling him along so they wouldn't lose each other. It felt nice, Sean's hand in his. He couldn't resist giving it a squeeze and was more than happy when Sean squeezed back. Despite the trouble he knew he was returning home to, it was well worth it. Sean was worth any hassle his father gave him.

They slowly stumbled their way to the path leading up and out of there. Dane pushed Sean to go first. "I'll catch you if you slip."

"My hero." Sean snorted

"Watch it, sleeping beauty." He squeezed Sean's ass, pushing him forward. Dane kept his hands in place as he pushed Sean up the hill.



“That’s very distracting. How am I supposed to concentrate on not breaking my neck with your hands there?”

“What here?” He squeezed again, unable to resist.

“Dane!”

He laughed. “Keep moving shorty or we’ll never make it out of here.” He smiled as he heard Sean muttering under his breath and gave his ass a slap, causing the muttering to falter. Smiling widely, he kept pushing.

They emerged onto the main path and headed in the direction of the car. Their phones only just lighting the way, hands clasped tightly together. When the car came into sight, Dane heaved a sigh of relief. As much as he loved the mountain, being up here in the dark was creepy as hell. Not that he’d admit that out loud.

They both climbed in, and Dane turned the heating up full blast. After sitting in silence for a while warming up, Sean reached over and touched his hand.

“I had a really good time today. I honestly wasn’t expecting it, but I’m so glad it happened.” He sounded shy, hesitant even in confiding this. “As you can probably tell, I’ve liked you for a while.”

“Come’ere.” Dane pulled him into his arms. “I really like you too. I’m not going to change my mind so you don’t have to sound so worried.” He reached up, brushing the hair out of Sean’s eyes. They could barely see each other, the glow from the dashboard the only light. “I meant it when I said I wanted to see where this went.” He lightly brushed his lips over Sean’s, his sexy little whimper urging Dane on. He deepened the kiss, holding Sean tightly against him.

Sean’s hands dug into Dane’s back and shoulder; clinging on as they both lost themselves in the kiss. It was both sweet and passionate, and Dane didn’t want it to end. Unfortunately, reality intruded and he knew he had to get them home. He slowed the kiss, gradually pulling away. They both leaned their foreheads together, prolonging the intimacy between them.

“Can I see you tomorrow?” Sean’s voice a lot less hesitant after their kiss.

“You bet, I’ll pick you up after work.” He planned to see Sean as much as possible. These new feelings he was experiencing were strong, slightly scary, but nothing would stop him exploring them. Not now that he’d felt how good it could be. Being with a girl didn’t even rate on the same scale as touching and

kissing Sean. He was no longer under any illusion about which side of the fence he was on.

It wasn't just physical though. He liked being with Sean. Liked the person he was when he was with him. It felt easy, natural, and there was no pretense between them. This was refreshing for Dane and enough for him to want to pursue this.

He reluctantly pulled away from Sean and started the engine. "Let's get back and get this over with. No doubt his highness will be sitting there watching the clock."

Sean shrugged. "At least he cares."

Dane gripped the wheel tighter. "Nah. It's more about control than caring. He's shown that enough over the years."

He felt Sean's hand on his leg. "You'll be out of it soon."

The touch settled Dane. "Yeah, I can put up with it for a few more weeks." He placed his hand over Sean's and headed back to civilization.

After dropping Sean off, he drove home, the taste of him lingering from the goodnight kiss they'd shared. It had promised so much more and left Dane wanting. His erection a reminder of the feelings stirred. He smiled as he adjusted himself, this better have gone down by the time he got home. It would not look good to walk in sporting a stiffy.

His father's reaction was just as Dane expected. He stood there glaring as Dane entered the living room, looking pointedly between him and the clock.

"Where the hell have you been?" Before Dane could answer he continued with his rant. "Your mother's been worried sick. We called all your friends, they hadn't heard from you. Hadn't seen you in weeks apparently." His eyes narrowed. "You've been hanging around with that geeky kid again, haven't you? It stops now!"

Dane opened his mouth, but his father rushed on. "This behavior ends. As long as you live under my roof, you'll behave in a manner befitting this family. Your friendship with that boy ends now."

Dane waited with his arms crossed and his eyebrows raised to see if there was any more to come. It seemed not, as his father matched his stance and just glared at him. He waited a moment, then cleared his throat and smirked, knowing he was about to infuriate his father even more. "Whatever." He turned and calmly walked to his room, locking the door behind him.

It didn't take long to get a reaction. "Dane Peterson, get your ass back out here, we're not done."

"Oh, I think we are." Dane spoke through the door. He knew he was pulling the tiger's tail, but he couldn't resist. It appeared that standing up to his father was addictive. "If you don't want me here anymore, just say the word. Colleges do have accommodation you know."

Silence greeted that statement. Followed by barely controlled outrage. "What's gotten into you?"

Dane wrenched the door open. "Nothing. I'm just finally growing some balls and answering you back for once." His father gaped at him. "Now, it's midnight, I'm tired, I'm going to bed. Goodnight." He closed and locked the door again, leaving his father standing there, for once lost for words.

It hadn't been the right time to mention San Francisco. For one, he didn't trust his father not to interfere. He would tell him, just closer to the time. He'd confirm everything first, then drop the bombshell. He shuddered. If answering his father back caused this reaction, he could only imagine the fallout when the truth about his future was revealed. This was going to be just as hard as he'd thought. But he would do it, he owed it to himself. Sean had made him realize that.

Sean. His eyes closed, images of their time together flashing through his mind. He shivered. What had this guy done to him? Not only had he pushed him to fight for what he wanted, he'd also exposed his sexuality. Shone a light on the person he really was, bringing it to the surface.

He knew he should probably be feeling all sorts of stress about this new turn of events, but he just didn't. It felt good and right and there was no nagging doubt in his gut that any of this was wrong.

Coming out officially was not an option for him right now; he had enough on his plate. There was already one confession waiting in the wings to be made. He certainly couldn't add this to the things he had to tell his family—not yet anyway. His father would blow a gasket as it was. Also, the prejudice both his father and brother had towards homosexuality would not make for a pretty conversation; definitely something to be left for a later date.

He had a feeling Sean would understand this and not put any pressure on him. There was a calmness that came from being around Sean that soothed Dane. Deep down he knew Sean would give him the time he needed to deal with this.

He lay on his bed thinking of the intense passion he'd felt today. He'd never experienced need like that before. God, he'd been horny. The feeling of rubbing up against Sean had felt so different, but so good. It still confused him as he'd never felt anything remotely like that for any other guy. It was just Sean. He had no answer for it.

Maybe you just needed to meet the right person and that triggered something. Released something inside you that was buried. Who knows? All he cared about was that it felt natural and right. Everything sexual before now had felt forced, so all he could feel right now was relief.

He needed to let these feelings settle inside him for a while before he expressed them to the rest of the world. He might be okay with this new change within him, but it was still a huge life change. Something he needed to sit with for a while and come to terms with.

At least he had Sean to talk to. Even with this new heat between them they were still friends. Dane knew he could confide in him if he needed to. Especially with the pressure now off about whether Sean was gay.

He instinctively grabbed his phone and dialed. Sean answering almost immediately.

"Hey." Sean's voice husky.

"Hey. You weren't sleeping were you?"

"No." There was a silence. "I can't stop thinking about today."

Dane laughed quietly. "Yeah, I know. I just felt like talking to you. You don't mind, do you?"

"Hell no. You're all I can think about."

Dane swallowed, unsure what to say next. "I don't know really why I phoned. I was just thinking about everything and... I guess I just wanted to hear your voice. Sappy I know."

Sean laughed. "Nah, I like that you did. Makes me feel I'm not alone in this... this thing between us."

"You're not."

"Good." Sean's breathing stuttered. "God, you were hot today."

Dane felt his own breathing increase. "So were you. I meant it when I said I'd never come like that before." Sean giggled. "It's true, I couldn't see straight."

That caused Sean to giggle even more. Then he became serious. "You caused the same reaction in me too. I couldn't get close enough to you."

Dane chuckled. "I know, those hands were going everywhere." There was a moment's silence as he imagined Sean blushing. He couldn't resist calling him on it. "You're blushing aren't you?"

"Am not."

He laughed. "You so are. Don't worry, I like it."

Sean spluttered, making Dane laugh even more. "You're impossible."

"Yep, that's why you like me."

Sean let out a small sigh. "Yeah, I do." His voice quiet.

"Me too." Dane now equally serious. "Still up for hanging out tomorrow?"

"Definitely."

"Cool. I'll pick you up at six." He sighed. "I suppose I'd better go, let you get some sleep."

"Okay. G'night."

"Night Sean." He hung up with a small smile on his face and a warm feeling spreading through him. Yes, this was definitely right. His smile widened and he closed his eyes, replaying their day together.

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Sean was cleaning down the surfaces at work, thinking how fast the last week had gone. With another day almost over, he was getting ready to close up, looking forward to meeting up with Dane. He glanced out of the window and noticed a youngish-looking man staring at him from across the street. He wouldn't normally have paid any attention, but it was certainly not a friendly look he was getting. A shiver went down his spine as he stared back. The man held his gaze for a moment longer, then turned and walked away.

Sean shook himself to get rid of the uneasy feeling running through him. That had definitely been weird. He wouldn't let it spoil his mood though, he had a night with Dane to look forward to. The foster parents were away for the night so Dane was coming over for pizza and a superhero movie marathon. He leaned back on the counter and thought back on the past week.

They'd seen each other every day, spending several hours together after Sean finished work. Mostly they'd hung out in Dane's car, talking and making

out. He smiled, recalling how well acquainted he'd become with the back seat of that car. His trousers tightened as he thought of Dane on top of him, their legs hanging out the door, both rubbing off against each other. He'd made a mess of his pants on more than one occasion.

They hadn't done much more than touching each other so far. He was hoping tonight things might progress a step further. He wasn't ready for sex yet, but there were other things they could try. He'd been doing some research online so his innocence didn't make a total fool of him. His trousers tightened even more as he thought of what he'd seen. Tonight really couldn't come soon enough.

His mind went back to the last time they'd been at the lake, a few days after they'd first kissed. They'd just skinny dipped together and Sean was sitting on the towels watching Dane. He'd insisted on getting some exercise after they'd finished playing around. Sean had thoroughly enjoyed the show he'd put on moving through the water. He'd walked towards him after his swim and stood over him, his gloriously naked body glistening.

As he'd leaned over, Sean had momentarily lost his mind. He'd pulled Dane down on top of him, and they'd rolled around, hands and mouths everywhere, making out like the two horny teens they were. It was one of his favorite memories of their time together so far. Just thinking about it got him hard. Dane really was his own wet dream come to life. He straightened up, forcing his mind back to the task at hand before he came in his pants. Tonight would be here soon. His dick jerked at the thought.

After demolishing an enormous pizza between them and making it through one-and-a-half movies, Dane got that look in his eye that Sean now knew so well. He bit his lip as Dane looked at him with the sensual heat that would soon have him panting.

Dane threaded his hand through Sean's hair, drawing him closer. Their lips met, tenderly at first and then with more force, an urgency taking over. Sean found himself pushed onto his back, Dane leaning over him, his hand stroking over the hardness in his pants. Sean groaned, arching up into Dane's hand. The hand tightened around him, causing his brain to short circuit.

"Naked now." He had to feel Dane's skin. Dane squeezed again and caught hold of Sean's bottom lip with his teeth. He slowly began to suck, causing Sean to almost go out of his mind with need. "Please."

Dane released him after one final suck of his lip, and they both disrobed in record time, coming back together with simultaneous moans of pleasure. Sean

quickly took over, rolling Dane onto his back and moving down his body. He took his time, leisurely kissing and licking his way to his destination. It didn't take long before Dane was writhing and panting beneath him, his hands touching any parts of Sean he could get a hold of.

When Sean settled between his legs and took hold of his cock, Dane raised his head. "Are you sure? You don't have to." His voice gentle despite the need etched on his face.

He smiled, knowing there was no pressure for him to do this. He wanted it, had been dreaming of it, and he was damn well going to do it. He grinned mischievously. "I know. Don't worry I've been practicing."

Dane sat bolt upright. "With *who*?" His eyes blazing.

Sean laughed, thrilled at his reaction. He pushed him back down. "Relax. My practice partner came from the fruit bowl."

"Huh?"

"A banana." Sean winked. "Several bananas actually."

Dane threw his arm over his eyes. "Oh my God. I'll never look at a banana the same way again." Sean laughed. Dane thrust his hips up. "Go on then, banana boy, show me what you've learned."

With a snort, Sean stilled Dane's hips with one hand and took hold of his length again with the other. He lowered his mouth and glanced up at Dane to see his mouth hanging open and his chest rising and falling with increasing speed. He smiled, loving having Dane at his mercy. After drawing it out for long enough, he poked out his tongue to take a taste. Dane shuddered, his panting increasing. Sean took this as a good sign and swallowed him completely.

"Aahh!" Dane's whole body practically came off the floor, nearly choking Sean in the process. He held him back down, took a breath and went to work, sucking, bobbing and licking to his heart's content. The taste of Dane spurring him on. He reached one hand under Dane, taking a gentle hold of his ass. Dane made unintelligible sounds, thrusting slowly into his mouth.

Sean found himself rubbing against the floor, the friction and Dane's responses making his own climax near. His hand stroked over Dane's ass, causing an idea to come to mind. He brought his finger to his mouth and thoroughly wet it, then moved his hand back to Dane's ass. He sped up his mouth as a distraction and then slid his finger to Dane's opening and traced around the outside.

He moved his finger round and round loosening his entrance, causing nonsensical gibberish to pour from Dane's mouth. His thrusting increased, causing Sean to suck harder. Just as he felt Dane stiffen, he pushed his finger all the way in searching for the spot he'd read about. As Dane started to come, he found it and brushed over and over it, wringing as much pleasure out of Dane as humanly possible, swallowing Dane's release with equal enthusiasm.

Dane jerked and shook through his orgasm, moaning Sean's name over and over until it was obvious he couldn't take anymore. Sean eased up and crawled over him until he reached his mouth, lying quietly until Dane opened his eyes. He gave Dane a sweet kiss and stared down at him, quirking his lips.

"So, how'd I do?"

Dane swallowed. "There are no words." His arms came around Sean holding him tight.

Sean settled himself and leaned down for another kiss. A deeper one this time, Sean wanting Dane to taste himself in his mouth. A naughty but insanely hot thought.

Dane groaned, his hands moving over Sean's ass. "What about you?" He spoke against Sean's lips.

"I'm good. Came when you did. Those noises you were making sent me over."

Dane pulled away slightly, his eyes fixed on Sean's. "Yeah. That thing you did with my ass—so hot. You read about that online?"

Sean blushed and nodded. "You didn't think I was too forward, did you?"

The smile he received answered the question for him. "I like horny-Sean. We want more of him."

Sean giggled, for once not caring about his red face. Dane pulled him back down and kissed him slowly and with so much feeling Sean's heart clenched. The feelings he had for Dane were growing so fast it scared him. But it also filled him with a sense of peace he hadn't felt in a long time. Since before his mother died. Sean held Dane tighter and tried to express with his kiss what he wasn't yet ready to say.

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## Chapter 6

After eventually getting dressed again and sitting in front of the movie, Dane turned to him. "I'm going to tell them in the next few days—about San Francisco." He gave a small laugh with no evidence of humor. "They're certainly not ready for the gay thing yet." Sean squeezed his hand. "I've confirmed my placement there and the accommodation is all sorted so I'm good to go. There's nothing he can do to interfere now." He frowned. "It's time to tell them."

Sean shuffled closer. "Okay. You know I'm here for you right?"

Dane smiled and pecked a kiss on his cheek. "I know. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be going anywhere." His face became serious. "You've given me the belief in myself to go for what I want." He tenderly stroked his cheek. "Thank you Sean."

He smiled back at Dane. No reply coming to mind as he wasn't really sure what he'd done. It seemed to be enough as Dane kissed him, this time on the lips. A slow sensual kiss that turned Sean to mush.

"I really liked what we did today." Dane's voice husky, his arms holding Sean close.

"Me too." Sean stared directly into his eyes. "I know I'm new to all this but all I want to do is touch you. All the time. You just have to give me that look of yours and I react."

Dane's grip on him tightened. "I like that person. He's got a very talented mouth." Sean squirmed under the scorching look Dane gave him. "Just wait till tomorrow night. You'll definitely feel my appreciation."

Sean groaned, dropping his head to Dane's shoulder. "I wish you could stay the night."

"Me too." He sighed. "The old man's still being difficult though so I don't want to push it. We're having almost-daily arguments as it is."

Sean pushed away and frowned. "About me?"

Dane shrugged. "He's not dictating who I'm friends with. No one will stop me spending time with you Sean." He started to argue, but Dane interrupted. "No arguments. You're too important." He shrugged. "Anyway, I'll be out of there soon."

“Are you sure you don’t mind me going there too? I really feel bad for copying you.” He smiled sheepishly. “It’s just that it looks so good and that photography course is the best I’ve seen.”

Dane mock glared at him. “Will you cut it out? You’re not copying me. We both just happen to like the same place.” He fixed Sean with his serious look. “You know I want you there.”

Sean relaxed. Yeah he knew, but it didn’t stop him needing to check every now and then. He glanced at the clock; it was nearly midnight. His sensible head snapped back into place. “You better go before my alter ego comes back and rips your clothes off.” He stared ruefully at Dane who sniggered.

“You’re probably right, but don’t forget tomorrow is my turn.” His eyes heated, and he pressed his lips to Sean’s in a searing kiss. “Tomorrow,” he promised. Then he got up and walked out, leaving Sean hard, horny, and helpless.

The next day at work May kept teasing him due to the silly smile that kept slipping onto his face. He knew it was there but couldn’t seem to stop it.

“You really have got it bad,” she said as he was taking the trash out. He ignored her, making his way outside to the back lane where the bins were kept. If he replied, he’d only end up embarrassing himself. He’d done enough of that already today.

He was heaving the bags into the dumpster when he heard footsteps behind him. He turned to find the same man who’d stared at him yesterday walking towards him. Instantly on edge he looked around but there was no one there but the two of them.

He licked his lips and stood up straighter. “Who are you? What do you want with me?”

He stared at Sean with hate in his eyes. “You and me need to have a little chat about your inappropriate attachment to my brother.”

Oh fuck. Sean’s eyes widened, immediately realizing who this was. “Look...”

He didn’t have a chance to go any further as he was roughly pushed up against the wall, the guy’s hand around his throat. “You listen to me, gay boy. The time spent with my brother ends now. You’re not going to spend one more second infecting him with your disease.”

Sean fought to breath, the hand tightening around his neck. He wanted to respond to the bile spilling from the guy's mouth but was unable to get any words out. He struggled to no avail. This guy was bigger and stronger than Dane. Eventually, his grip loosened. He glared at Sean with an ugliness he'd never experienced before. So much hate clear in his eyes.

Sean cleared his throat. "Being gay is not a disease."

Dane's brother crowded in on him. "Not only is it a disease, but it's wrong, unnatural, and you are not dragging my brother down that path." His nose wrinkled in disgust. "I've seen you both rolling around together in the back of his car." He spat on the ground. "Disgusting."

Sean gasped. "Have you been following us?"

"Had to do something to find out why Dane started acting the way he has." He sneered down at Sean. "He was completely normal until he met you."

Sean closed his eyes, knowing none of this was true but having no idea how to handle this situation. He didn't want to do anything that would make things worse for Dane.

"Here's what you're going to do." He shook Sean pulling his attention back to him. "You're going to text him saying you can't see him anymore. Then you are going to avoid all contact with him." His eyes pierced Sean. "Because if you don't... this little encounter will feel like a fantasy ride compared to what you'll get."

Everything inside Sean rebelled. He glared back. "Do what you want to me. The only way I'll stop seeing Dane is if he tells me that's what he wants, and I can tell from his face that he means it." He continued to glare at the man threatening him with equal hate in his eyes.

Dane's brother tilted his head, studying him. "Yeah, I think you mean that."

"I do," he said through clenched teeth.

"So be it. We'll go for option two then." His look unwavering in its intensity.

A shiver went through Sean. "Option two?" What was he going to threaten him with now?

"Yeah." He smirked. "You're obviously not concerned with your own well-being, maybe you'll be concerned with Dane's."

Sean's breathing stuttered. "What do you mean?"

The hand around his neck tightened again, the smirk now gone. “What I mean you little weasel is that if you don’t leave Dane alone I’ll have no choice but to out him to our father. The result of which will have him chucked out and disowned by the family. Maybe that’ll straighten him out.” He shrugged. “It doesn’t particularly bother me either way. I’m done with him after what I’ve seen.” He looked down at Sean like he was a bug he’d like to step on. “There’s no way in hell my father will ever accept a gay son. So unless you want to destroy his whole family I suggest you leave him the hell alone.”

Sean was left dumbstruck, his mind going blank. With his point obviously made, Dane’s brother gave his neck one final squeeze then released him. He gave a cruel grin and then walked away.

Sean sank to the ground. His eyes squeezed shut, his mind wanting to rewind the last few minutes and pretend they hadn’t happened. His eyes opened as a heaviness settled in his chest. Dane’s brother had meant every word. He could tell from the look in his eyes they’d been no empty threats. He’d been so disgusted at the thought of having a gay brother that he was prepared to have him disowned.

The throwing out part wasn’t so much a problem as Dane was leaving anyway—not that they knew that yet. But losing his family? That was something Sean couldn’t be complicit in. He’d lost his own family. Knew the loneliness and fear that came with that. He couldn’t put that on Dane. He wouldn’t. His heart clenched painfully. He rubbed his chest. Why? Why did this have to happen? Everything had been going so well. He felt tears forming. For himself, and for the hurt that he knew he was about to cause Dane.

A hate so consuming filled him. Why couldn’t people just accept their children the way they were and love them anyway? Why did there have to be conditions placed on love? It wasn’t right. There was so much prejudice in the world. No wonder people hid their true selves. It wasn’t surprising Dane had lived most of his life torn up inside, pretending to be someone he wasn’t. It was so unfair.

He had to let Dane focus on getting away from all that, without all the gay stuff getting in the way. He was a distraction and a threat that he didn’t need. Dane needed to focus on his future. Getting away from the negative influence of his family. But at the same time not losing them completely. There must be love somewhere there, and Sean couldn’t risk him losing that love. Family was precious despite their faults.

He pushed himself to his feet, brushing away his tears. He knew what he had to do. The heaviness inside him increased as the realization set in. This felt so wrong and yet there was no other option. He couldn't put his own needs above Dane's. If he stayed... No, he couldn't put Dane through that. He raised his collar to hide any marks on his neck and headed back inside. With his eyes down he grabbed his stuff and shouted to May that he was off, then escaped before she could see him. If she saw his face, she'd know instantly something was wrong. He'd never been very good at hiding his feelings.

As he walked home, he took his phone out. He was meant to be meeting Dane later. That was no longer possible. He stopped walking, his gut feeling like he'd been punched. The thought of never seeing him again was suddenly overwhelming. His body trembled. Was he doing the right thing? He knew Dane wouldn't think so. He straightened up. Yes, he was. He was protecting Dane. He owed him that much after the friendship he'd shared with him this summer.

He closed his eyes tightly and took a deep breath. He could do this. Upon opening his eyes a firm resolve settled over him. His mind made up he tapped out a text to Dane cancelling their plans, then headed home making a list in his head. The first thing he had to do was write a letter. Dane deserved to know the truth. He rubbed his chest again, the ache persisting. Sean didn't think it would ease up anytime soon. He sighed and kept walking.

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Dane didn't get it. He really didn't. He'd left Sean the other night convinced he was happy. So why was the guy avoiding him? It had been three days. Three days of having his calls, texts, and visits ignored. He'd even been to his work only to be told he'd phoned in sick. What the hell was going on? He didn't think he'd upset him.

He pulled up in front of the coffee shop determined to find out what was going on. This was the fourth day now, he couldn't still be off sick. Taking a deep breath, he got out and walked inside.

There was no sign of Sean so Dane went up to the counter where he found May staring at him with sympathy in her eyes. His stomach twisted. This was not a good sign. He bit his lip, hesitant to hear what she had to say.

She sighed. "He's gone Dane."

He just stared at her as if she were speaking a foreign language, his heart rate picking up. "What do you mean gone?"

“He left yesterday. I’m sorry, I tried to talk him out of it.” She looked genuinely distressed. “He left this for you.” She reached behind her and retrieved an envelope which she passed to Dane. He stared at it for a moment too stunned to move. May came around the counter and guided him to a seat.

“Come and sit down.” She sat opposite him. “I think you need to open it. He explained things a little to me, but I’m sure there’s more in the letter.”

Dane looked up. “What did he say to you?”

She squeezed his hand. “Just read the letter then I’ll answer whatever questions you have.”

He sunk back into the chair, his heart plummeting. With no enthusiasm whatsoever, he opened the envelope and pulled out the letter. Taking a steadying breath, he began to read.

*Dear Dane*

*First of all I’m so sorry to do this by letter, but there’s no way I could have done it in person. Writing this is painful enough.*

*Your brother came to see me Dane. He knows about us. He threatened me and when that didn’t work he threatened you. He’s been following us, saw us making out in your car. He threatened to out you to your father, to get you thrown out and disowned. He meant it Dane, I could see it in his eyes. If I’d stayed around he’d have caused no end of trouble and pain for you.*

*I can’t let you lose your family Dane. I know what it’s like to lose everyone you love. I won’t put you through that, especially not because of me.*

*Please know that everything I ever said to you was true. Your friendship has meant the world to me. You’ve made me happier than I’ve been since before my mom died. I’ll always remember this summer and what we had together.*

*Please still follow your dream Dane. Don’t give in. Escape and live your own life.*

*All my love, always*

*Sean.*

He looked up at May, not bothering to hide the tears in his eyes. There was anger coiling inside him, but he'd deal with that later. "Where's he gone?"

She sighed. "I don't know. He wouldn't tell me. He tell you about your brother?" There was anger in her voice.

"Yes." His own anger rising to the surface. "I'll deal with him later. Do you think he's gone to San Francisco?"

She shrugged, looking just as lost as him. "I really don't know. He just said he'd call when he got settled somewhere."

"Stubborn boy! I don't care if my brother does out me. I'm sick and tired of living a lie." He thumped the table. "He's done this for nothing. I was going to come out anyway at some point. Sooner rather than later now. I'm not having my brother thinking he can hold it over me." He huffed. "If only he'd told me, I wouldn't have let him do this."

May smiled. "He knew that Dane. Why do you think he avoided you for days? That boy can't hide his feelings to save his life. If he'd seen you, he wouldn't have been able to stop himself telling you. He wasn't prepared to risk that."

"Damn martyr. I'll find him. Then I'll give him hell for running out on me. Good reason or not."

"You really think he's in San Francisco?" Her face brightened.

"It's what he planned." Dane closed his eyes. "I've got to think he's there. Because if he's not..." His voice broke. He opened his eyes. "No, I won't think that. He will be there and I'll find him." He stood up. "Now if you'll excuse me I've got a family to deal with."

May stood and gave him a hug. "Wait." She grabbed a pen and wrote her phone number on the back of the envelope. "Let me know if you hear anything. I care about him, he's been through a lot."

"Sure." He pocketed the letter and the number. "Hang on." He got the envelope back out and ripped off a corner. After writing his own number down, he handed it over. "You call me if you hear anything too. Even if he tells you not to tell me where he is."

She hesitated, then took the number. "Okay. I wouldn't normally go against his wishes, but in this case I think he made the wrong choice, despite the good intentions." She smiled. "You're good together, and you tell him I said so when

you find him.” She hugged him again, holding him tight. “You will find him.” They stared at each other when she let him go, a camaraderie forming. He smiled then walked out, preparing himself for the confrontation to come.

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## Chapter 7

As soon as he arrived home, he saw his brother, and without a moment's hesitation, he walked up to him and punched him in the face.

"What the fuck!" He grabbed his face and glared at Dane. "What was that for?"

His teeth ground together. "You know exactly what that was for," he almost snarled.

His brother smirked. "Your little boyfriend's run away with his tail between his legs has he? So sad."

Dane clenched his fists, determined not to get carried away with a brawl, no matter how much he wanted to. "Keep out of my face *and* my life."

"With pleasure." He sneered. "After what I saw you doing you're no brother of mine."

"Suits me, now fuck off."

His brother shrugged and headed for the door. "Was headed out anyway. Not my problem anymore, I've done my bit."

Dane forced himself to breathe deeply and turned his back before he went after him and finished what he'd started. When he'd calmed slightly he went to his bedroom and started packing, he had plans to make.

He booked bus and plane tickets, making the first use of his trust fund and also rang the accommodation office at the university. After checking it was all right for him to move in sooner than planned due to unforeseen family circumstances, he finally started to relax. At last he was taking firm control of his life.

Telling them that he was going didn't seem like such a scary prospect anymore. The fear of never seeing Sean again far outweighed any disapproval from his father. He closed his eyes, refusing to let the fear overwhelm him. He would find him, somehow.

He heard the front door open and close and the muffled conversation of his parents as they walked through to the kitchen. Steeling himself, he stood and went out to face them.

As he walked into the room he mentally crossed his fingers for luck. They were both putting shopping away and paid him no attention. He cleared his throat and went for it. "I need to talk to you both." He turned and walked out into the lounge. After a few minutes, they joined him, questioning looks on their faces.

Grabbing hold of the strength he'd gained from his time with Sean he plunged ahead. His heart desperately holding onto the hope of seeing him again. He took a deep breath and stared his father in the eye. "I'm not going to Boulder." He waited for the sparks to fly, but nothing happened. They continued to stare at each other as a heavy silence descended on the room.

After what felt like forever and Dane was on the verge of repeating himself his father finally cleared his throat. "What do you mean by that statement?" His words clear and precise.

"What I said." He paused for what he hoped was a dramatic effect. "I'm going to San Francisco."

"You are not!" His father's face becoming red. "You'll damn well do as you're told."

Dane tried to remain calm. Not easy considering how rattled he felt after everything that had happened today. He put his hand in his pocket and felt the letter. His insides settled slightly.

"Yes I am, it's all arranged. I'm sorry I've had to do it this way, but you've made it impossible for me to talk to you. Both you and Alex..." His back stiffened as he thought of his brother. "You both act like you've got the right to control my life." He breathed through the anger and forced himself to continue. "I know you want me to join the family business, but it's not what I want. I can't live my life anymore according to what you want. I need to find my own way."

"You selfish, ungrateful little bastard! After all I've done for you, who the hell do you think you are?" His face now verging on purple.

"Frank!" His mother turned on him. "Don't you dare speak to him like that. He's right. You're always trying to control him, to control all of us. It's his future not yours. If he doesn't want to work for you, he doesn't have to." She glared at him, causing Dane to look on in shock. She'd never stood up to his father before, not that he'd seen.

"Our son has the right to make his own choices." Dane blinked, she obviously wasn't done yet. "My mother foresaw this, that's why she set up the

trust funds. She knew you'd try and interfere with their lives. If Dane wants to go to San Francisco then that's where he'll go and you'll do nothing to stop him."

She took a step closer to his father who flinched. "Do you understand me Frank? Because if you interfere it won't just be a son you'll lose. I'll pack my bags too. And don't think I'm bluffing because your controlling behavior has reached the limit of my patience too." With that, she stepped back and crossed her arms, her eyes never breaking eye contact.

Dane took a lung full of air not realizing he'd stopped breathing. He cautiously looked in his father's direction to see him staring open mouthed at his mother. She stood her ground, her eyebrows raised. He snapped his mouth shut, glared at Dane and stormed out of the room. Dane collapsed into the chair next to him, staring gratefully at his mother. A new respect growing for the woman who raised him. "Thank you." His voice barely above a whisper.

She crouched in front of him. "Dane I wish you'd talked to me."

"I didn't know how." He gave a sad smile. "It wasn't until I met someone that I started thinking differently."

"A girl?" He bit his lip, wondering if this was the moment. She laughed gently before he could reply. "A boy."

"I umm..." He stared helplessly back at her.

She squeezed his hand. "Dane honey, I'm not your father. It's kind of obvious you're not that into girls. He may go around with his head up his ass, but I do not."

He laughed. This was a side of his mother he hadn't seen before. "Doesn't it bother you?"

"That you're gay?" Dane quickly looked around. "Don't worry he's sulking in his study, he won't be out for hours." She fixed him with a calm but serious look. "And no, it doesn't bother me that you're gay. Your father, on the other hand... well, maybe you better leave telling him for another day. We don't want to overload his brain all at once."

"Alex knows."

"Your brother? How do you know?"

"He threatened Sean, told him that he'd get me thrown out and disowned if he didn't leave me alone. So he's gone, thought he was protecting me by

leaving.” He shook his head at Sean’s false logic. The pain he was in now far worse than any reaction from his father. For the first time in as long as he could remember, he’d found someone he could truly be himself with and had fallen deeply for the guy in the process. By using his family against him, his brother had touched a nerve in Sean, guaranteeing he’d react in the only way he could. His past had seen to that.

His brother chose that moment to walk back through the door. “I would like a word with you, Alex.” His mother’s voice cold as ice. She stood and smiled down at Dane. “We’ll talk later.” Then she gestured for Alex to follow her to the kitchen. He did so, shooting daggers at Dane.

Now alone, he finally began to relax. It was done. His father had been told and for once was not forcing his will. Not that Dane would have stood for that, but thanks to his mother he hadn’t had to really go into battle—she’d done it for him. The relief flowed through him. She knew he was gay and she hadn’t freaked out. She’d accepted him completely. He hadn’t seen that coming. To be quite frank, he hadn’t seen any of today coming.

Just thinking of his brother and what he’d done made him want to punch him all over again. They’d never been close, but he’d never thought he would ever betray him in such a way. Thank God he was leaving, he really didn’t think he could stay in the same house with him after what he’d done. He supposed he better tell them it was tonight. After a few calming breaths, he stood and went to check he was all packed.

His mother had cried when he’d told her he was leaving tonight but had immediately understood. She was insisting on driving Dane to the bus station. He’d catch a bus to Denver then fly on from there. With a last look around his room, he went to meet his mother out front. His father was still in the study, still sulking apparently, and Alex had disappeared. It was a relief. He’d had all the drama he could stand for one day.

The letter crinkled in his pocket as he walked along. It reassured him, strengthening his resolve. Sean Daniels was going to be found whether he liked it or not.

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## Epilogue

There was a knock at the door, the sound loud in Sean's tiny apartment. Tiny but his and he loved it. He frowned as he walked towards the door; no one ever came calling on him. It was probably a mistake. He swung open the door and froze, his mouth falling open.

"Hello Sean."

"Dane." His heart started pounding. He'd found him. "How?"

"May."

He closed his eyes. Of course. He knew she thought he'd made the wrong decision. He'd only recently rung her with his new address and phone number. He shook his head, sneaky woman.

"Can I come in?"

"Oh yeah, sorry." He stepped aside. Just seeing Dane again was almost paralyzing. There were so many conflicting feelings running through him. But the one making its presence felt the most was relief. Just being in the same room again brought Sean a sense of peace he hadn't felt in over four months. Every day he'd had to fight against missing Dane and longing to be in his arms. He'd dreamt of him over and over, some of them nightmares with Dane's brother playing a starring role.

"Sean, we need to talk." He came back to the present to find Dane staring at him, his eyebrows raised. He swallowed, unable to look away. It was like no time at all had passed.

"Okay." At this point, he'd have agreed to anything. This was why he'd written the letter. Face to face it was impossible to deny him anything. How the hell was he going to stand his ground?

Dane stared at him, his posture rigid and expression fierce. Then slowly his face softened and his shoulders slumped. He let go of a shuddering sigh. "It's taken me months to find you." His voice barely audible. He glared at Sean. "I should spank your ass for running from me."

Sean blinked. "But I..."

"I know why you did what you did. But you made the decision for both of us and you shouldn't have. I had a right to make my own mind up and you took that right away."

Sean couldn't speak, his mind racing with Dane's take on things. The hurt staring back at him punctured his heart. "I'm sorry. I just thought I was doing the right thing. Your brother..."

"Forget about my brother. He's an asshole. Him and my father both. My mother's the only one that matters." He smiled. "She stood up for me when I confronted my father. She also guessed I was gay." He shook his head. "She's fine with it. In fact, it's brought us closer. We speak more now than when I lived there."

Sean bit his lip. His next question lodged in his throat. "Does your father know?" His voice barely above a whisper.

Dane grimaced. "Yes, Alex told him after I left—his revenge."

"Alex?"

"My brother. I'm not exactly flavor of the month back there." He shrugged. "Hell, I don't care. Like I said, my mother's the only one that counts. I'm done with the rest of them." He walked closer, stopping directly in front of him, an intensity burning in his eyes. "So that brings us back to you Sean."

"Me?" His voice unsteady. The hunger in Dane's eyes making him step back.

"Yes you, precious." He stalked Sean until his legs bumped against the bed. "Are we done with this running shit?"

"So you still want me?" Something in him needed to hear it.

Dane looked at him as if he'd lost his mind. He pushed him onto the bed and leaned over him. "I've searched for you for four months. Going into every coffee shop, accommodation office and evening class I could find. So in answer to your ridiculous question, yes I still want you." He glared down at Sean, who grinned back at him. Four very long months of dreaming of this very moment, combined with Dane's obvious acceptance of his family situation, instantly dissolved every ounce of resistance in Sean.

"Good." He pulled him down smashing their mouths together. Both instantly relaxing the moment they touched. Sean pulled him up onto the bed refusing to release his lips in the process. They devoured each other. The time apart having stoked the fire between them.

"I want you Dane. I've missed you so much." Sean panted as he spoke between kisses, complete lust taking over his brain. But it wasn't only lust

burning there. The warmth in his heart matched the heat in his groin, pushing him to go after what he ultimately wanted—Dane inside him. He captured his eyes. “Please, I need you.”

Dane pulled away and studied him. “We don’t have to rush this. We’re together now, there’s no hurry.”

Sean swallowed, trying to focus his mind to explain the feelings inside him. “I know there’s no rush and I also know you’d never put any pressure on me. But I thought I’d lost you, that I’d never see you again.” He closed his eyes. “I need to feel you Dane. To reassure me that it’s real.” He opened his eyes and smiled shyly. “And there’s no one I’d want for my first time other than you.”

Dane’s eyes became possessive. “You better not, precious, otherwise I will spank that ass.”

Sean giggled. “So masterful.” He became serious. “Please Dane. I need to feel you inside me.”

That seemed to ignite something in Dane. He took Sean’s lips in a forceful kiss, his hands moving down to claim his ass in a move of ownership. Sean groaned, giving himself over to the kiss and Dane’s possession. There was nothing he desired more than for Dane to take him completely.

“Take your clothes off, Sean.” It almost came out as a growl.

Sean giggled again, loving this new side of Dane. He could order him around all he wanted as long as he kept that look in his eye. Sean had never felt so wanted. They both stripped in record time, Sean grabbing the lube from his cupboard and Dane retrieving a condom from his wallet.

Sean raised an eyebrow. “Hoping to get lucky?”

Dane shrugged. “Only with you.” He frowned. “I didn’t come here to get into your pants you know.”

Sean pulled him down on top of him. “I know that.” He gently cupped his face and smoothed back his hair. “We’ve been apart for long enough. I want you, Dane. Now.”

Dane whimpered and leaned down to kiss him. Slowly at first, a sweet kiss filled with emotion. As they moved against each other, this built, merging into desire, need, lust and many other things Sean had no name for. He reached for the condom, ripping it open and pushing it at Dane, who had to take a breath to calm himself.

He knelt between Sean's legs and rolled on the condom, reaching for the lube. Sean lay there with his stomach fluttering as he watched Dane's every move, the building anticipation causing him to tremble. Dane moved closer, and Sean automatically pulled his legs back exposing himself, unable to prevent the blush caused by such an intimate position.

"Don't be embarrassed." Dane's voice soft, his hands gentle on Sean as he stroked his entrance. "You're beautiful."

Before he could respond, Dane's finger breached him, causing his eyes to close at the new sensation. He lay there in a haze as Dane sensually stretched him, adding two then three fingers, smoothing the way for what was to come.

By this time Sean was gasping, the need for more overwhelming him. Dane also looked as though he was hanging onto his control by a thread. He leaned over Sean and lined himself up.

"Tell me if it hurts. I'll go slow."

Sean just nodded, unable to respond due to his rapid breathing. Instead, he pulled Dane down and wrapped him up as he felt him push inside. There was an initial burn which caused him to bite down hard on his lip, squeezing his eyes closed.

Dane froze. "Sean?"

He shook his head. "No keep going, I'll be all right in a minute." Feeling Dane's hesitation, he wrapped his legs tighter and pulled Dane deeper, the burning easing into a pleasurable fullness.

"Oh Sean." Dane thrust deeper, unable to resist any longer. "So good." He hid his face in Sean's neck and slowly began to move.

The feeling of Dane moving inside him, them both clinging to each other was the most intense experience of his life. They kissed and stroked each other, neither in a hurry to end this. Eventually, their bodies took control, the urgency to climax taking over.

Dane sped up, Sean matching his movements perfectly. He reached for himself, but Dane brushed his hand away, stroking him with matching precision. Sean crushed their mouths together and came, shuddering through his orgasm. Dane stiffened, cried out and buried his face again, clinging on as he shook through his own release.

After disposing of the condom and wiping Sean clean, they lay under the covers in each other's arms, no space between them. For the longest time no words were spoken, only hands moving soothingly over each other's bodies.



After what felt like an eternity of being lost in their own little bubble, Sean spoke, his voice soft. "I'm so sorry for hurting you. I just thought I was doing the right thing." He leaned up on an elbow and stared down at Dane, his heart fluttering at the look in his eyes.

"It's over with now," his voice equally as soft. He reached up to stroke Sean's cheek. "We're together." After gazing at each other for a moment, Dane frowned. "Why haven't you started college yet? It's made you very difficult to find."

Sean settled back down and nestled into Dane. "I decided to just work for a few months and save. I had no idea how expensive it was going to be supporting myself. It's all under control now though—at last. I start college next week." He glanced up at Dane and then hid his face. "I'm sorry I changed my phone number, but I knew if I spoke to you, I wouldn't be able to resist you... you'd have talked me round."

"Hmm, stubborn man." He tightened his arms around him. "No more running. Whatever problems we have we face them together."

Sean glanced up, holding Dane's gaze. "I promise." They continued to stare at each other, and Sean sensed this was a turning point for them. A fresh start to be built on and cherished.

Dane took a deep breath. "I know we're only young Sean, and I don't know exactly how you feel, but this just seems right to me." He paused, a crease forming on his forehead. "You're the only one who saw me for who I am. The only person who's ever given me the strength to fight for what I want. If I hadn't met you and become your friend, I'd still be two people in one body, torn between doing what's expected, and being who I really am." He started to smile. "But it's not just that. It's you... I fell for you right from the start. It just took you taking your shirt off for me to realize it."

Sean felt his eyes moisten at the sincerity in Dane's voice. The look in his eyes reflecting the feelings in Sean's heart.

"I love you, Sean."

He nodded, choked up by the building emotion. He did the only thing he could do in this situation. He kissed him.

**The End**

## **Author Bio**

*Angela Maye is a hopeless romantic who is addicted to reading romance. Sweet, sexy, whatever. You name the genre—as long as it's a love story—she'll probably enjoy reading it. Having recently discovered a passion for writing her own love stories, you'll often find her with a pad and pen, staring dreamily out of the window creating characters and stories in her mind. MM romance has become her favourite thing to read and write and this has led to some very steamy imaginings and some very strange looks from her husband. Long may it continue.*

## **Contact & Media Info**

*Angela Maye can be reached on*

[Twitter](#)