

LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

A DARK LOVE STORY

Jonathan Treadway

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

A DARK LOVE STORY

By Jonathan Treadway

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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[Arizona sunrise](#), [Yellow sunset with boats](#)

[Poollicht](#), [Perfect white beach](#)

[Sunset in Prague](#), [Purple mountain sunset](#)

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A DARK LOVE STORY

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Photo Description

Attractive man with short grey hair and grey stubble leans against a chain-link fence on the steps, a lit cigarette between his full lips, and his legs spread. His white button down is totally open to his manscaped chest and sixpack, the sleeves rolled up. The olive and red suspenders look classy with his partially opened tan slacks. His head leans back with his eyes half-closed, and the blood from the cut over his right eye has slowed.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

This song is the story of me and my husband.

[“Love Interruption”](#)

Our love story is not a typically romantic one. It was anything but usual. It wasn't BDSM but it was definitely twisted with a slight delirium added to it. We do love each other dearly but that did not stop us from being dysfunctional, both with each other and people around us. Almost everybody says we should not stay together. That was not a choice either of us wants to make. So we stayed together, loving one another, despite how it twisted us like jumbled cords.

Please make this a dark love story but not BDSM or D/s, that would be too easy for what I intended. Please make it about two people whose love drives people around them crazy not with prejudice or bigotry. Just that they did not think it was good for either of them to stay together. They mean well but that was not more important than the couple's love for each other. This couple do drive each other crazy as well but the alternative, of being with other people, was something that neither of them wanted. So they stayed together, no matter what happened, what is happening and what will happen.

Sincerely,

Pete

P.S. Please use this [Live Performance](#) to set the tone of the story.

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: law enforcement, homophobia, established couple, dark, 2 alpha males

Content Warnings: graphic violence; past child abuse

Word Count: 11,144

A DARK LOVE STORY

By Jonathan Treadway

“You’re late! Hurry up and change,” Joe Callahan heard his husband, Doug Hart, yell from the bedroom as he shut the door to their apartment. “We gotta leave in like, five minutes, to get there reasonably on time.”

“Shit,” he muttered to himself, his heart sinking. “Late for what?” he yelled back. He shrugged out of his jacket, draping it over the chair next to the hall table, then took off his gun and locked it into his storage box in the hall closet, holster and all. He dropped his keys into the basket on the table so he would know where they were if he had to rush out for a call. All he wanted to do tonight was drown his frustration in a few beers and crash on the couch while watching mindless TV. He definitely did not want to do whatever it was they were supposed to.

It had been a particularly shitty day at work, with the kid dying this morning at the hospital. He and Bud McKinney, his partner at the LAPD and his best friend, had answered a call yesterday where a man had beaten up his thirteen-year-old stepchild, apparently spewing antigay slogans from the Bible at the top of his lungs as he hit and kicked the frail, somewhat effeminate boy. Timmy, his name had been. Timmy’s stepfather had made so much noise that a neighbor had called it in, and even though the two cops had raced over to the dilapidated apartment building with sirens blaring, they had been too late. Timmy was unconscious when they found him, just lying there with his limbs at awkward angles and blood pooling on the floor under his head. Frankly, Joe was amazed the kid had made it to this morning.

Days like this made him wonder whether he was going to make it to retirement without cracking. While he loved his job, it was slowly grinding him down as people continued to do awful things to their loved ones, or even just someone who was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

By this time, Doug had entered the living room, dressed in a nice yellow cashmere V-neck sweater. He was wearing some fancy designer jeans that Joe didn’t know anything about, except that they hugged Doug’s ass perfectly and emphasized the nice size of his package. When that view didn’t provide even a ping of interest in his own, he knew staying home was the right thing to do. He

was tired and pissed at the world right now. Dinner out with Doug's friends, who were probably artsy-fartsy, bitchy, and so not Joe's idea of fun, was going to be tediously long and full of snarky pokes at all their mutual friends. Well, at least Doug's friends. Joe's friends were into sports, beer and cars, and couldn't care less about the current art scene, who was with who, who was recently dropped, who made more money, who had the best/worst/most eclectic/most boring taste in clothes/interior design/shoes/boyfriends, etc. It was going to be God-awful, Joe knew, and definitely not his thing.

"Hon, we're meeting Will and Manuel in forty-five minutes at Hinoki & the Bird. I reminded you about dinner this morning as you were rushing out the door." Doug sounded exasperated.

"Fuck, sweetie, do I have to go? I'm bushed and it's been a really lousy day." He headed over to Doug and tried to kiss him hello, but Doug stepped back. *Uh oh*, Joe thought. *It was going to be one of those arguments.*

Doug's face flushed, his eyes glaring at his partner. "Yes, Joe, you fucking have to. They're coming in from San Diego to meet us for dinner, and you didn't make the last one because of that Chinese guy's case."

"Well, it's not my fucking fault that he got whacked when we were supposed to have dinner with them. You know I can't control my schedule." Joe tried to tamp down his temper, but it flared anyway, both because he had no interest in meeting these guys, and because the job was often a bone of contention between them.

"Yeah, I know that. But sometimes you use it as an excuse to get out of doing something that you don't want to do."

"I do not!" Okay, he did but he was not going to let Doug win that point.

"Yes, you fucking do. And tonight is a perfect example! You know I've been planning this dinner with Will and Manuel for months. They really want to meet you, and I want them to meet you."

"Doug, I am not in the mood to make nice tonight with some people I don't know just because you like them and think I will too. It's been a fucking bad day and I just need to veg on the couch. Preferably with you but that's not critical. Can't you postpone it for a week or two? Or better yet, just go without me?"

"No, it's too late to do that, damn it! They're probably nearly at the restaurant by now and we're going to be late. Again. So go get dressed; I put some clothes out for you."

“Oh, great, not only do I have to make nice at some frou-frou restaurant, but you’re now dressing me up like a mannequin? What’s wrong with what I have on?” Joe could feel his own flush of anger rising up his neck, which was not a good sign. But fuck it all, Joe did *not* want to go out tonight and meet these people. Why couldn’t Doug give in once in a while? It wasn’t like he wouldn’t have fun without Joe, for fuck’s sake.

“It’s wrinkled after being worn all day and you need to freshen up. Hurry up, Joe. I don’t want to be too late and we’re pushing it now. Just wash your face, put some deodorant on, and get into those clothes. Don’t take longer than five minutes!”

Realizing Doug wasn’t going to budge on this, and frustrated as hell that Joe couldn’t get Doug to listen to him, he sighed and headed slowly toward the bedroom while unbuttoning his shirt front and sleeves. Jesus, Doug put out clothes for him? Wasn’t he a little old to be told what to wear? It was just one more thing that reminded Joe of how much he was not going to like these guys. That decided him; he knew he would be a bastard tonight and if pushed, he could even turn a bit cruel, and that was not the impression he thought Doug wanted to give. He walked into the bedroom even as he continued their argument.

“Why can’t you take no for an answer, Doug? I do not want to go and chat with guys who are just going to make fun of all these people I don’t know, drink until they’re so nasty I’m embarrassed to be with them, and then get all kissy kissy while they claim, ‘just kidding!’ I mean, you’re even afraid to let me pick out my own clothes. You think I’m going to embarrass you? That just makes me so sure I’m gonna like these guys if they’re so superficial they’ll judge me by what I wear.” Joe glanced at the clothes on the bed, realizing he’d never seen either of the items before. “Wait! What the fuck are these clothes anyway? I’ve never seen these before,” he yelled.

“I got you some new jeans; they’re Hugo Boss. You don’t like them?” Doug had followed him into the room and sat on the bed.

“Shit, Doug. You really are embarrassed by me, aren’t you?” Joe stared at the clothes on the bed, recognizing that the shirt was silk. While he admitted it was his favorite color—a nice, dark maroon—it pushed another one of his buttons. “And a silk shirt? What’s wrong with fucking Levi’s and a plain ol’ cotton button down?”

“Nothing. I just thought you might like to be a little more fashionable, that’s all.” Doug shrugged and tried to look innocent. It wasn’t working.

“Yeah, right. You never buy me clothes because you know I hate all that designer crap. It’s a fucking waste of money. So why the hell are you trying to make me dress like this? Who are these people that you feel I have to impress them?”

“They’re friends who I met at an AIDS benefit about five years ago. We kind of lost touch but reconnected about a year ago. I told you about them. They’re really wealthy and have a mansion on the water in San Diego, a boat, a fancy car, etcetera.”

“Well, I don’t remember. Sorry. I can tell they’re just my type of people. NOT. I sure as hell don’t want to meet them if I have to dress like a clone of all the other gay guys out tonight just to make you comfortable to be seen with me. Shit, Doug. Way to go, buddy.”

Joe shook his head in disbelief, hanging up his tie in the closet. Knowing he would regret it later but not particularly caring at this point, he unequivocally realized it was right to stop Doug right now and not yield to his demands. Again. It felt like he was always the one who gave in because it was just plain easier to live with Doug when he got his way. Nope, this was going to be the day where he stood firm and got what he wanted for once. He knew he would be really shitty company tonight, and the designer clothes were the icing on the cake.

“This is bullshit, Doug. I’m not going. Just go without me. Come back afterwards with them and I can meet them over a drink or something.”

“No, I am not going to show up alone again. The whole point of this dinner is to get you to meet them, and I’d be too embarrassed to see them without you. They’re beginning to think you’re just a figment of my imagination. I want them to see that you really exist, and that I’m not making you up. Besides, you’ll like them. I promise.”

“That’s ridiculous, Doug. They’re your friends. You’ve known them for years. It’s just plain stupid that you’re embarrassed to see them alone. And what makes you think I’m going to like them if you have to buy me new clothes so that you don’t look bad?”

“Look, I admit I want you to look nice and that’s why I bought you some stuff, but it’s not that different from what you normally wear. You’ve had the same clothes for years! I thought you would appreciate a bit of an upgrade, that’s all. You don’t embarrass me, okay?” Doug glanced at his watch and frowned. “Come on and hurry up, Joe! We’re really going to be late and you

could have already changed by now instead of just arguing and being an ass about everything.”

“An ass? Really? Shit Doug, you’re the one being an ass. At this rate, I’m not going to like *anyone* tonight, and if you make me go, I will be really pissed off. I mean REALLY pissed off.” Joe glared at his husband, determined not to back down. “I am not going. Period.”

“Why? What is so fucking shitty today that makes it worse than any other day? Huh? You’re always bitching and complaining when I try to get you to do anything social, especially with any of *my* friends. But you’re always ready to head out when it’s *your* friends.”

“Bullshit. You’re always out with your friends, mostly without me. And I always invite you to meet us after work but you rarely do because you hate my friends. Why can’t you just go tonight without me and I can meet them later when I’m relaxed and in a better mood?”

“Because tonight you’re going to come with me and be nice to *my* friends, and I won’t take no for an answer. This has been planned for months! So get your fucking ass in gear and put on those clothes and let’s get out of here.”

“I told you, I’m not going, Doug. Tonight is not the night to push me.” Joe glared at Doug, put his clenched fists on his hips, and waited.

“Oh, really?” Doug’s temper tipped over the edge, and he jumped to his feet, shoving Joe back against the wall with his momentum. “There, I pushed you.”

“Fuck that.” Joe pushed back, his anger bubbling over, uncontrolled. “I am *not* going out to fucking dinner, so just make my excuses like a good boy,” he yelled. He grabbed the drinking glass on the bedside table next to him and threw it against the far wall, reveling in the feeling as it smashed into pieces.

“Fuck you! I’m not your fucking boy!” Doug lunged at him and in no time at all, the two men were shoving, hitting, pushing, and grappling with each other. Joe kept yelling about how he did not want to eat out tonight of all nights and that Doug was an asshole trying to dress him up like a snob, and Doug shouted about how Joe never wanted to go out with any of Doug’s friends, and how Joe’s job consumed him and left no room for them being together. It was always the same old arguments...

“I’m a fucking cop! You knew that when we started dating eleven years ago, Doug. Nothing’s changed except that now I’m a detective and have even

worse hours,” Joe said as he tried to twist Doug’s arm behind his back to stop Doug from hitting him.

“And that means that I never see you anymore. Why do you have to be married to your job? It keeps getting worse and worse.” Doug wiggled out of Joe’s hold and punched him in the shoulder, narrowly missing Joe’s chin because of a well-placed block by Joe’s arm.

“It’s my fucking job to figure out who, what, when, where, and why a murder happens, and the more we can get done immediately after the deed, the better chance we have of solving it. You know that! I tell you that all the time. Maybe this time you’ll listen.” Joe had grabbed Doug again and pushed his back against the bedroom wall with an arm against his chest. Doug kicked out at Joe’s groin, and Joe had to shift quickly to avoid his knee, loosening his hold on the other man. Doug ducked out of the way, twisting his body so that he faced Joe.

“Oh, fuck you, Joe. Why do you have to be in homicide? Can’t you do something else so that we can do stuff together? I barely saw you last weekend, and now you’ll be all tied up again in this new case.”

Joe saw the fist coming toward him too late, and he had barely moved when it hit him just above the eye. Doug’s ring caught his skin, and he felt it rip. He raised his hand to stop the blood he could feel welling up in the cut, and cupped his eye. “Shit!”

Having had enough, he turned and left his husband in the bedroom, stomped out into the hall and through their front door, and ran down the stairs two at a time. Sometimes, leaving was the only way to stop the fighting, and he was too tired and frustrated to do anything but escape.

He headed to the small stone landing outside, lucky he hadn’t tripped on the stairs when using only one eye. He sat down on the left side of the cement stairs after moving down a few steps, taking his hand away from his face to see how badly it was bleeding. Pulling down his suspenders, he slipped off his button down and whipped off the T-shirt underneath, shivering a little in the cooling air. He wiped his bloody hand on the undershirt, and pulled the button down back on, leaving it open and slipping his suspenders back over his shoulders just to get them out of the way. Joe wadded up the cotton T-shirt and pressed it against his cut. After a few minutes, he looked at the blood, and decided it wasn’t too bad. It seemed to be slowing down. He could feel the swelling starting at the corner of his eye, and hoped it wasn’t going to turn black. He

needed ice, but there was no way in hell he was going back up until Doug cooled off. Feeling around his eye socket, he decided that nothing was broken and he would live to fight another day.

Joe sighed at that thought. As usual, the fight had solved nothing at all, but just brought up all the same old arguments. And wasn't it fucking ironic that he was cut with the ring he himself had given Doug last year to celebrate their tenth anniversary? Just peachy. The ups and downs of his and Doug's relationship over the years never seemed to even out. Wasn't that supposed to have happened in the "nesting" stage, back when they were still fairly new and trying to find themselves as a couple?

He sighed, shaking his head, thinking he should probably go upstairs and if not apologize, at least check out the situation since they were now really late for this f-ing dinner, but he just couldn't seem to find the energy to move. He leaned his head back against the wrought-iron railing and closed his eyes, wrung out. It wasn't his fucking fault that he'd forgotten they were supposed to meet two of Doug's rich friends from out of town tonight; he'd been a little preoccupied at work.

After sitting through an interview for three hours with the God-fearing fuck who'd killed his stepson, and listening to all his shit, Joe knew he'd end up being a prick over something tonight at dinner and scaring these friends of Doug's off. So screw them; there wasn't any reason he could think of that he *had* to go out. Doug could have just met them and made his apologies. But *noooo*. Doug was all set on introducing him in his fancy duds and wouldn't listen to reason. They lived in fucking LA, for god's sake. There were murders every minute of every day, and it was not his fault that murders had happened during both visits. It was just a normal day in LA. Doug knew how stressed he'd been lately, but it obviously didn't matter when he wanted something. Joe tried not to talk about his cases at home but sometimes he just had to let some steam off when it was really bad. Like tonight.

On top of it all, hearing the murderer rant and rave this afternoon had brought back some unwanted memories of his own childhood. Joe got his temper from his father, who was an unforgiving homophobe and overall bigot, convinced the world was against him. Being a fundamentalist Baptist minister did not help matters either, and his father had taken out his anger and frustration with life on his son and wife in the privacy of their home. Once Joe grew tall and strong enough to take on his father, he'd done so at every opportunity to protect his mom. Joe's father hadn't appreciated being stood up

to, and it had gotten even worse as Joe kept growing. Joe's mother died of breast cancer when he was seventeen, and from then on it was war between the two men because his mom wasn't there to step in and mediate.

In a fit of rage over hearing his father's tirade about how the homos had taken over his favorite bar and turned it into a frou-frou, pansy place, Joe had told him to be careful how he spoke about gay men, because he was one of them. That had been the last straw, and after a falling-down, no holds barred fight with his father, Joe was told to grab his stuff and get out. Joe did it fast, too, before his father changed his mind and prevented him from taking his computer or car. They hadn't spoken since. At least he'd been out of high school and mostly packed for the police academy, so it was quick work to pack up and leave. Joe had stayed with a good friend for the last month of summer vacation until he started school, and never regretted leaving. He had not been back nor did he ever plan to see his father again.

Hearing footsteps coming down the stairs, Joe opened his eyes and saw his lover eyeing him uneasily as he slowed on top of the landing.

"You okay, Joe?"

Joe watched Doug for any signs of what he was thinking, but didn't see anything. Even through his concern, Doug was using his 'everything's fine and I don't want to talk about it' face. Joe hated it, because it meant there was no use trying to talk any further until Doug processed what happened, analyzing it to death. Joe was the sort who got angry in a flash, but once the poison had been spilled and they fought it out, it was over and done until the next one. Doug could hold onto the argument for days, but they never seemed to talk about it when it was done. He hated it. Hated the way their relationship had disintegrated into calm periods between fights. Hated the distance that had been growing between them over the last eight months or so. And hated that they had once again resorted to physical violence to resolve a stupid disagreement.

Shrugging his shoulders and realizing he had not yet answered, he muttered, "I guess," as he looked at the bloody T-shirt in his lap.

"Why don't you come upstairs and I'll fix that cut. It looks like it stopped bleeding."

Joe gathered what little energy he could muster and rose from the steps. He followed Doug up to the second-floor apartment, unable to stop himself from admiring Doug's tight backside and broad back. Joe was pretty built because he loved lifting weights and pushing himself at the gym to decrease some of the

frustration at his job, but Doug was a runner, all lean and rangy. He loved the son of a gun to death, but these days it just didn't seem as though that was enough.

"So what's happening tonight?" Joe asked quietly, knowing that they were really late.

"Nothing. I told them something came up at the last minute and we couldn't meet them."

"How'd they take it?"

"Well, they were annoyed but decided to go to the restaurant anyway. I'll call them tomorrow and apologize again, and see if we can maybe go down there to see them next time."

"Fine. Thanks."

Doug sat Joe down on the closed toilet, and opened the medicine cabinet to grab the stuff he needed. After wetting a washcloth with warm water, he wiped the blood away from Joe's face. Doug sighed in relief, and the look Joe hated was gone, replaced by the regretful face that was becoming more commonplace. He was starting to dislike that one too.

"It's not deep, Joe. I'm sorry my ring did this to you. You just need some antibiotic stuff and a small Band-Aid. You'll have a bit of a black eye, though."

Joe nodded but kept quiet. He was going to get shit yet again from Bud tomorrow. He could hear it now.

"Oh, shit, Joe. Not again. Why do you stay with the fucker if he keeps hitting you?"

"Why do you think? It was a misunderstanding."

"A misunderstanding? I just don't get why you still hang with the fucker when you beat each other up all the time. It's getting fucking old, Joe."

"Jesus fucking Christ, Bud. It's none of your goddamned business."

"It is my goddamned business when you come to work with a black eye. Just leave the bastard and get your life back into something approaching sane."

"No, I won't leave him, no matter what you or anyone else thinks. Yeah, it's kind of fucked now, but it'll get better. It always does."

But Joe wondered deep down if that was really true. He loved Doug like he had loved no other and it was tearing him apart that things seemed to be

escalating. He couldn't seem to stop jumping to anger over any little thing, and because Doug also had a quick trigger, it inevitably ended up being physical. It was what he was used to growing up, and he couldn't seem to control it. He was sick and tired of being hurt, both mentally and physically, and having to defend his lover all the time when his friends thought he was a fool to hang onto someone who beat him. Joe was pretty sure Doug felt the same way and was as frustrated as he was, but neither seemed to know what to do about it, and therefore just ignored it.

The feeling of a Band-Aid being pressed to his temple brought Joe back from his musing. He watched Doug quietly and efficiently clean up and wondered what to do next. Joe glanced down at his still-opened shirt and decided to finish changing into more relaxed clothing.

"Thanks."

Doug nodded but didn't say anything, so Joe stood and went into their bedroom. The glass from the bedside that he'd smashed into the wall was cleaned up and the new clothes were gone from the bed. At least the glass had been a cheap one and not one from their set of crystal goblets like the last time. He looked up after slipping off his shirt and tossing it into the hamper, and saw Doug leaning against the door frame of the bedroom.

"What are we going to do, Joe?"

"About what?" Joe thought he would play dumb. He didn't think he had it in him to get into a deep, dark discussion tonight.

At Joe's answer, Doug sighed, looking defeated. "Us. It's... we're getting worse, Joe, and I can't stand it much longer." Joe saw the deep sadness in Doug's eyes, and it caused him to raise the white flag, at least figuratively. It so reflected his own frustrations with their life; there was no way to ignore the issues any more. The relationship was beginning its death spiral and that was the absolute last thing that Joe wanted.

"Me either. It's been a really shitty day, Doug, and I just didn't need this on top of everything else."

"I'm sorry." Doug sighed and moved over to Joe, taking his hand and leading them to the bed so they could sit. "You keep saying that but I haven't exactly given you a chance to explain why it's been so shitty. Tell me about it?" Joe accepted the peace offering and sat beside his lover, keeping Doug's hand tightly in his, hoping it would lend him some strength.

“I’m sorry too. Remember me telling you about that kid yesterday?”

“Timmy? The gay kid who was beaten by his dad?”

“Stepdad. Yeah. He died this morning.”

Doug shut his eyes and shook his head in sympathy. “Oh, shit.” When he opened them and looked at his husband again, Joe could see in his eyes the acknowledgement of what that would do to him, with his own father troubles and beatings.

“Yeah. So Bud and I picked the fucker up and spent the afternoon listening to him talking shit about fags and cocksuckers, and how the Bible was the law, and God hated ‘the gays’. And what a fucking fairy Timmy had been and how he still liked My Little Pony, which was for little girls, not teenaged boys. He was trying to beat some ‘man’ into Timmy and make him ‘grow up’.” Joe’s eyes started burning at the waste. “It’s so fucking unfair to cut someone’s life off like that over fucking religion. God, I hate that shit. I had enough of it growing up. That poor kid was just so goddamned young.”

Doug pulled Joe into his arms and held him as Joe burrowed into his neck, fighting the tears in a moment of weakness and hugging his lover back. He was not going to shed tears; it would break him and he’d start crying at every fucking homicide and never stop. He was a cop, for fuck’s sake. He saw shit that most people wouldn’t be able to handle every goddamned day. Why was this one different? It seemed to be hitting him like nothing else had in a long time.

He pulled back after a few minutes, mostly back in control. He was glad Doug didn’t say anything since his husband knew from experience that Joe hated losing even that small amount of control. The walls were rising once again and they seemed to be back in limbo, living in this little valley of uneasy peace until the next blowout.

Joe stood, knowing they hadn’t solved anything but not willing to talk ‘feelings’. “You wanna beer? I desperately need one.”

“Sure. What do you want for supper?” Doug asked, also standing. He seemed to accept the moment of closeness was done and gone.

“Don’t care, as long as it’s quick. I’m starving,” Joe said, forcing a grin onto his face. He figured it probably looked like a death mask but at least he tried.

“Pizza? I can run over and get it so we don’t have to wait.” Doug cocked his head at Joe, one eyebrow raised.

“Shit yeah, Doug; that’d be perfect.” Doug nodded and left the bedroom, heading downstairs, presumably to get the beers.

Joe quickly finished changing into a T-shirt and cutoff sweats, took a piss, and headed down to the kitchen to grab his beer. Doug wasn’t there so he must have gone to the pizza place. Opening the beer, Joe chugged it down, threw the bottle into recycling, and grabbed two more. He opened one and left the other on the counter for his husband.

Wandering into the living room, Joe grabbed the remote and turned on the news.

“In other news, young Timothy Vernon died early this morning at General Hospital from the beating he allegedly received from his stepfather, Bernard Kawalski. With his mother by his side, Timothy never woke up from his coma. Kawalski has been picked up and charged with first-degree murder, which could carry a death penalty. He will be arraigned tomorrow. His lawyer, Guinevere Vanderbilt, read a short statement but did not allow any questions...”

Joe switched channels until he found a rerun of “Law and Order,” deciding he needed a good ending to a police story and not anything more about poor Timmy. He vegged, feeling himself finally relaxing. When Doug arrived with the pizza, they both dug in and inhaled it.

“Another beer, Joe?” Doug asked as the last rerun ended.

“No thanks. Not if I want to get up and actually work tomorrow.” Nodding, Doug grabbed the trash and took it into the kitchen where he got another beer for himself. It had ended up being a quiet evening, but the two men had decided that it was necessary after the past few days and the ruckus earlier this evening.

“Ready for bed?” Doug asked as he headed back into the living room.

“I’m not really tired yet,” Joe said, looking over at Doug in confusion. It was only about 9:30, pretty early for bed.

Doug winked. “Who said anything about sleeping?”

“Oh, shit yeah.” Joe was up and off the sofa, peeling his T-shirt over his head and dropping it somewhere as he headed to the stairwell. “First one on the bed gets his cock sucked!”

“Hey, that’s cheating!” Joe could hear Doug racing up behind him, and tried to put on more speed before Doug could grab him and shove him aside, but he

wasn't fast enough. Doug snagged his jeans and prevented Joe from taking the next step, which of course made him trip. He had to grab the banister to prevent himself from tumbling down the stairs, and Doug pushed past him and shouted in triumph. "Hah, I win. Get those lips up here."

Shaking his head, wondering what the hell he'd been thinking challenging Doug when he knew the man would do anything to win, he walked up, thankful he hadn't fallen ass over heels down the stairs. One black eye was enough; he didn't need any more bruises tonight, thank you very much. He found his husband stepping out of his jeans and briefs while pulling the sweater over his head. Seeing his perfect revenge, Joe stepped over to prevent Doug from getting his sweater off. He grabbed the garment and wrapped the sleeves around his arms, tying them together, knowing it wouldn't take Doug long to wiggle out of them but giving him a slight advantage for a minute while Doug's head was covered.

"Hey, what are you doing? Where's my blow job?"

Chuckling, Joe quickly stripped while keeping one hand on the sweater so that Doug couldn't escape. "I said first one on the bed, not first one in the bedroom." He gently pushed Doug away and jumped onto the bed, watching in amusement as Doug flailed his arms around, trying to get the garment off. When he finally dropped it to the floor, he growled at Joe and plopped down on top of him.

"You fucker. I'm gonna remember this." He leaned down and kissed Joe, then bit his bottom lip.

"Ow. Yeah, I know. But I won. So where's my blow job, huh?" Doug kissed Joe again, this time with meaning, and Joe closed his eyes in relief. Shit, it had been a long time since they had both fooled around like this. He hadn't realized how much he had missed their joking and playfulness, not to mention the sex. He opened his mouth immediately and the kiss became wet and sloppy, both trying to take control. They rolled all over the bed, messing up the bedspread until it finally fell off. Landing on the bottom with Doug over him, Joe gave up and sank into loving his partner. Between breaths, Joe and Doug kissed, nuzzled and licked each other until they were both panting in desperation, rubbing their cocks together. Joe could feel the pre-cum ooze from his prick, making the whole area slick between the two of them. Joe grabbed Doug's shoulders and tried to push him down to his aching cock.

"Come on, Doug. Blow me. Now."

Doug cocked an eyebrow, but obediently moved down Joe's body, biting then licking his nipples, and nibbling down his abs. Joe moaned in appreciation, his skin sensitive to Doug's touches and his nipples sending zings down to his penis, which twitched in anticipation. Every once in a while, Doug would stop and suck up a spot on his skin. Joe knew that he'd have to watch where he changed tomorrow so that no one would see the hickeys all over his chest and stomach. Not that he really minded, but the guys at the precinct would give him hell if they saw the results of Doug's attentions. As good as this all felt, Doug was everywhere but where Joe needed him most, and he finally yelled, "Doug! Goddamn it, suck my cock!"

His husband must have heard his desperation because he lifted his head, grabbed Joe's cock at the base, and shoved his mouth all the way down in one move. He stopped when he could go no further and sucked hard while his tongue moved up and down his cock. Doug then pulled up slowly, not releasing the pressure one iota. Joe couldn't help groaning, it felt so good. "This is going to be fast, hon," he warned Doug, who nodded in agreement but didn't stop moving up and down Joe's dick. He kept up the strong suction and moving his tongue in ways that had Joe writhing. Doug started humming, grinning as well as he could with a big dick in his mouth as he looked up at his lover, knowing it would push Joe over the edge.

"Oh, crap!" Joe shouted as he felt his balls harden into little marbles and tighten into his body. The cum roiled in his balls and shot out of his penis, drowning Joe in ecstasy as waves of pleasure rolled over him. Doug swallowed it all down and pulled off when Joe finally started softening. He licked all around Joe's groin to be sure it was clean, teasing Joe with little flicks that eventually started to get annoying. Pulling Doug off with one arm, he tried to pat his head with the other but missed, hitting his shoulder instead. He was too blissed out to worry about it, though.

"I'll get you in a minute," he groaned when he could think again.

"No need, I came when you did." Looking sated and very self-satisfied, Doug smiled at his husband.

"Shit, without touching?"

"No, I used my other hand. I was as desperate as you." Doug moved up the bed and Joe opened his arms to welcome his lover home.

"I owe you one."

"Don't worry. I won't forget."

Joe nodded, knowing that was true, but he couldn't seem to care. He could sense himself starting to drift asleep. Kissing Doug on the forehead as he pulled him even closer, Joe murmured that he loved him.

"Love you too, Joe." It was the best Joe had felt for weeks, and he reveled in the feeling of peace. He remembered no more.

The scene at work the next morning went just like Joe imagined, with both Bud and his captain giving him grief for the slightly swollen blackened eye and Band-Aid. At least the eye hadn't turned nasty black, just purplish blue. Joe just shrugged their comments off, knowing that no one would understand their relationship and not feeling like yet another argument with Bud.

The partners spent the day interviewing people in Timmy's apartment building to develop a rock-solid case against Mr. Kawalski. Timmy's mother was no help at all; even when separated from her husband, she would not talk. Of course, she hadn't been there when Timmy was beaten, but she wouldn't even tell them anything about previous problems between the two.

"Mrs. Kowalski, Timmy was your only son. You're going to let your husband get away with killing him?" Joe asked in disbelief.

"He's my husband." The woman just sat there and stared at the two men, sullen and mostly non-responsive. Her lawyer made sure she stayed quiet as well. Bud and Joe finally gave up in disgust, knowing that many women would stick with their husband no matter how bad their home life was, afraid of being alone and penniless.

"God, what a fucked up family," Bud commented later as he shook his head in disbelief. "Her only son is dead and she's still protecting her husband."

They were eating lunch at a diner, comparing notes from their interviews with the building tenants. After Joe and Bud had talked to Mrs. Kowalski at the station, they had driven to the apartment building, split up and taken different sides of the Kowalski's floor, which has five other apartments on it. Once they finished there, Joe moved up one floor and Bud had moved down.

"At least the neighbors ratted them out, so there are a couple of good witnesses who the ADA can put on the stand," Joe said before taking another huge bite of his Reuben sandwich. He was starving and the food was fantastic—greasy, huge and very filling.

“Assuming they agree to do it. It’s easy to say yes now, but some will chicken out, I bet.” Bud took a sip of his soda. “When they find out that their own background will be delved into when the defense lawyer tries to discredit them, some will probably disappear. I mean, who wants their skeletons revealed when trying to help someone else? I sure as hell don’t.”

“Like you have so many skeletons.” Joe shook his head in disbelief. Bud was squeaky clean as far as he was concerned. A sweet wife, two almost perfect children, a nice home, amazing parents; it was all totally opposite to his own upbringing.

“Hah, you think you know me. I might have a few skeletons deep in my closet.” Bud wriggled his eyebrows, trying to look like he had deep, dark secrets but failing miserably.

“Yeah, like you forgot to return a library book when you were twelve.”

“Well, that’s stealing. Stealing’s bad.” The two men snorted in laughter, and finished up their last few bites before getting up to go back to work. Heading back into the apartment building around two, the men split up and continued knocking on doors and asking questions. They finished in the late afternoon, not getting much more, and headed back to the precinct to write up reports.

It was almost eight by the time Joe walked in his own apartment door, but he had the next two days off.

Hearing Doug’s voice in the bedroom, he walked over to the door after putting away his gun. Seeing that Doug was on the phone, he stopped and listened.

“I don’t know if I can do it, Will. Sure, it’s pretty shitty right now because we argue all the time and end up hurting each other, but I don’t want to leave him. I love him too much. He’s it for me.” There was quiet and then Doug said, “Maybe, but not yet. We need to talk this weekend and see if we can do something to fix things. I will try anything and everything before I do something that drastic.” More silence. “No, I told you I wasn’t going to come down until Joe and I talked. Quit pushing me, Will. I know what I’m doing.”

Joe closed his eyes in despair, wondering if it was going to come down to one of them walking out. He agreed that it couldn’t go on much longer like this, but Doug leaving was the last thing he wanted to happen. That would be ten times worse than living the way they were now.

Doug turned and looked startled to see Joe standing there, leaning against the doorframe with his arms crossed and muscles bulging. "I need to go, Will. Joe's home. I'll call next week, okay?" He signed off and threw the phone down on the bed.

"Hey," Doug said.

"Hey. You wouldn't really leave me, would you?" Joe walked over to the bed and sat down next to his husband.

"I don't want to, Joe, but we have got to figure out what's going on because I can't stand living like this anymore. We're fighting all the time and I'm tired of not only fighting you but also my friends, who don't understand why I stay. They think I'm being abused, Joe."

"Yeah, I get the same stuff from Bud and the guys. I hate this spiral we're in but I have no clue how to stop it. The least little thing seems to set one of us off and then it's all downhill from there." He sighed. "Have you eaten? I'm starving."

"Not really. I had some cheese and crackers around six. Let's go out." Joe changed out of his suit and they headed to their favorite steak place. After a filling dinner and splitting a bottle of wine, the two lovers held hands walking back to their car. They weren't talking much, content just being together, so Joe picked up on the footsteps behind them pretty quickly. He started walking faster, pulling Doug by the hand, but they didn't get far.

A man jumped out of the alley right in front of them, a knife in his hand, and Doug and Joe were forced to stop. Joe tried to pull Doug off the sidewalk and onto the street, but the two men behind them moved to block them. All three men were wearing dark hoodies, with the hoods up and black knit masks on. Joe pulled Doug close and a little behind him, turning them so that their backs were to the wall. As they pushed up against the brick, the three attackers moved into a semi-circle around them to prevent them from running away. Joe could feel Doug trembling against him, and his left hand moving to the middle of Joe's lower back. He pressed against Doug, hoping that his closeness would somewhat reassure him. This was bad, but he didn't want Doug to know quite how bad. And he had stupidly left his backup weapon in his car, which was still several blocks away.

"Look what we got here, boys. A coupla fags," the guy in the middle was saying, snickering. All three of the guys were armed, two with knives and the third with a pipe. Shit, Joe thought, where are the police when you need them?

He felt Doug's hand moving slowly into his left front pocket to grab Joe's phone, and Joe shifted slightly so that he blocked the thugs' view of what was going on. The three jeered at the two lovers and laughed at their own jokes. So far, Joe hadn't said anything, but decided it was time to talk and try to distract them when he knew that Doug had the phone.

"Look, we don't want any trouble. Just take what you want and leave us alone." Joe reached behind and pulled his wallet out of his back pocket. "I've got about a hundred bucks. Doug, give me your wallet too." Joe could feel Doug reaching for his own, which he eventually placed it in the same hand holding Joe's. Getting a better grip on both wallets, Joe held them out to the guy in the middle, figuring he was the leader, making sure to keep them far enough away that the thug would have to take a step toward him to grab it. Joe could feel his phone falling back into his pocket and figured Doug had called 9-1-1 and just left it in silent mode. "That's pretty much all we've got."

"We don't want no money. We just wanna hurt the fags, right, Rambo?" The smaller guy on the right looked over to Rambo in approval while moving his knife menacingly.

"Fuck, you asshole. No names, remember? You're so fucking stupid." Rambo shook his head and took a step closer to the wallets. Joe thrust them out further to the right, trying to entice the guy. In a flash, Rambo drew his knife across Joe's inner forearm, making Joe drop the wallets as he pulled his arm back against his chest. Shit, he thought. The guy was smarter than he figured.

"Hah, think you're so smart, fag. Who's bleeding now, huh? Just like a queer to try to protect his honey. You both afraid to fight? Little girly men hiding against the wall..." Rambo was taunting them both, and the other two were laughing hard at Joe's predicament.

Joe glanced quickly at the cut, which was bleeding profusely, then pressed it back against his torso. It looked pretty deep, and Joe knew that he might be in trouble. Meanwhile, Joe tried to keep Doug from moving anywhere, but Doug couldn't keep quiet.

"Girly men? Shit, look at us. We're both bigger than any of you." Pushing back against his husband, he tried to warn Doug against speaking any further.

"Shut it, Doug," he tried to whisper quickly. Glancing at Doug, he glared at him to shut up. He then turned toward the three men, still talking shit but fortunately not doing anything else.

“You might want to rethink attacking me, Rambo. I’m a cop.”

“Bullshit, fag. You ain’t no cop. So, how you feeling now, huh?” The smaller Asshole on the right tried to move closer to Doug, but Joe shifted further to the right, trying to block his lover from coming out and attacking. He and Doug were at a distinct disadvantage without any weapons, and he was trying to kill time so that the police could get there.

“Got something against queers? What, couldn’t get your cock sucked by these other homos?” Doug asked as he finally gently but firmly pushed Joe aside and moved up to stand next to him. Shit, shit, shit, Doug. What the hell are you trying to do? Joe wondered. He knew Doug had the capability to defend himself, but he was trying to prevent any bloodshed or further injuries to either of them. Challenging them wasn’t going to exactly help their situation. But it was too late and both Joe and Doug moved into more defensive stances.

“Fuck you, fag. Why don’t you come over here and suck my dick for me,” Rambo was saying as he grabbed his cock and squeezed it through his pants with his free hand while pointing the knife at Doug.

“Don’t think so, Rambo,” his husband said, trying to keep an eye on Asshole. All three guys were closing in toward Joe and Doug. The quieter guy on the other side of Rambo suddenly moved toward Joe, lifting the pipe, and Asshole slid even closer to Doug. Rambo stayed in place, fortunately, spilling hate and obviously enjoying himself while his cohorts did the dirty work.

“Hey, I’m not kidding about being a cop. You might want to look in my wallet,” Joe said to Rambo as he turned to face the guy with the pipe. He barely had time to move before the pipe landed hard on his shoulder. Joe hissed at the pain, knowing something was probably broken, but at least the guy had missed his head. He heard a knife clattering on the sidewalk and knew that Doug had kicked it away. Asshole landed with a thud after Doug kicked him in the head, but Joe was barely aware of that fact. He was suddenly fighting for his life against both of the other thugs, trying to keep his hold on the arm with the knife while dodging the pipe, all while protecting his injured shoulder.

Quiet Guy saw his chance and raised the pipe again, but Doug was yelling and screaming and crashed into him, knocking them both down. Doug landed on top and was trying to grab the pipe but the guy under him had at least twenty pounds on Doug and was strong.

Joe’s sliced arm wasn’t strong enough to stop the knife and his other arm was hanging uselessly. While Joe looked into the guy’s black eyes, trying to

shift the angle of the knife, Rambo grinned as he thrust it into Joe's side. Joe moaned in agony, trying to keep upright against the wall. He swung his leg out and smacked Rambo in the nuts, hard. The man leaned over to protect his crotch, groaning, and Joe punched him as hard as he could in the head with his knee. Rambo went flying backward, landing hard on the cement and cracking his head. He didn't move again, fortunately, so Joe quickly turned to check on Doug.

Or at least tried to. He could feel himself starting to black out from the pain those last few moves had created, but he tried to fight it as he slipped down the wall and landed on his ass. He was relieved to hear sirens in the distance and he watched Quiet Guy flip Doug over and sit on top of him, both still grappling for the pipe. Joe, frightened for Doug, tried to move to help, but the thug stilled when the sirens grew louder. Checking the other two guys, and seeing that they were out cold, Quiet Guy decided to cut his losses. He stood, kicked Doug in the ribs for good measure and to prevent Doug from getting up and chasing him, and ran off down the alley with his pipe.

Gripping his ribs and grimacing in pain, Doug slowly rose to his knees and crawled over to Joe with one arm. Joe was losing consciousness as he heard Doug calling his name. "Joe, don't leave me. Joe, answer me! Joe!" But everything turned black and Joe heard nothing more.

It was the continuous beeping in the background creeping into Joe's mind that woke him, and he slowly became aware that he was in the hospital. There was no forgetting those smells and sounds, as he knew from previous visits. He felt someone check his pulse and he opened his eyes, wincing a little at the brightness.

"Welcome back, Joe," the nurse said. "You're in the recovery room after your surgery. How are you feeling?" The woman continued to check the instruments hooked up to him and take notes while she waited for Joe to answer. Joe's mouth felt like cotton.

"Can I have some water?" he croaked. His throat hurt and he felt like shit. The nurse nodded and reached over for a cup.

"Here are some ice chips. As soon as you wake up a little more, you can have some water. Does anything hurt?" she asked as she tipped a few into his mouth. Joe accepted the chips and sucked in relief, opening up for more.

He took inventory of his body, noting that he pretty much hurt all over. "Yeah, it all hurts. Where's Doug? My husband, Doug Hart? How is he?"

"I believe he's upstairs in the surgical waiting room, so he's out of the ER. That's all I know. Sorry. We'll be taking you up to a room as soon as you're fully awake, and you can see him then. Your surgeon will be by shortly to talk to you about everything he fixed, but you came through surgery with flying colors and you'll be just fine."

"Great, thanks." It was hard to pay any attention between the pain and his worry over Doug.

The nurse gave him some pain medicine in his IV, and he relaxed as the pain level lowered, immediately falling back to sleep. The next time he awoke, he was a little more comfortable and within an hour, he was moved up to a room out of the recovery area. The surgeon told him that his collarbone was cracked, and they had stitched up his arm and side.

"You were very lucky in that the knife didn't hit anything major, although it nicked a rib. You'll need some physical therapy for your arm and shoulder, but you should recover fully."

Joe tried to take it all in, but he just wanted to sleep some more after he saw Doug. He didn't ask how his husband was since he figured that they wouldn't tell him. He'd wait until he was in his room then raise hell until he either had Doug in the same room with him or knew where and how he was.

Fortunately, both Doug and Bud were waiting for him when he arrived.

Doug walked over next to the hospital bed on the other side from where Joe was being moved. He waited impatiently until Joe was moved over from the gurney, then leaned over and kissed him gently on the lips. He rested his hand on Joe's thigh and squeezed before the nurse shooed him away until she could get Joe settled. She finally left the three of them alone after warning Bud and Doug not to tire Joe out. As much as Joe wanted them there, he was fading fast but needed to know how Doug was.

"Joe, damn I'm glad to see you. How are you doing?" Doug asked, relieved he could actually touch and see his husband.

Joe tried to shrug, then remembered why that wasn't such a good idea. "Oh shit, that hurts. I'm a little out of it but feeling pretty good," he commented, wiggling his eyebrows at Doug. Bud had lifted a chair and brought it over to the other side of the bed, pushing Doug around the bed by both shoulders and then into the chair.

“Watch it, Bud,” Doug warned as he winced after landing on the hard seat.

“Oh, damn. Sorry, Doug. You okay?” Doug nodded as he grabbed Joe’s hand, squeezing it gently then twining their fingers together.

“How are you, Doug?” Joe asked. “What happened after I blacked out?”

“I’m okay. Two cracked ribs and some scrapes, but that’s it. You got the brunt of it. The cops arrived right after you lost consciousness, and called a couple of ambulances. They took Rambo in one, but the guy I hit was put into the back of the squad car since he wasn’t as badly injured. Bud showed up about five minutes later as they were working on you, and he brought me here to wait for you.”

“Yeah, I got a call when they figured out it was you and Doug, so I rushed over to see what was going on,” Bud said. “They said you were badly hurt and on the way to the hospital, so I brought Doug to the ER and made him get checked while we waited.”

“Thanks, Bud,” Joe said quietly, sharing a look with his partner. They both knew that Doug wouldn’t have had himself checked until he knew what was going on with Joe.

“No problem. That’s what partners do. I’m gonna head out now that I know you’ll live, but I’ll come back tomorrow, okay?”

“Sure. Give my love to Kayla and the kids.”

“You bet. Take care of yourself, Joe.” Bud patted Joe’s leg and left the room. Doug squeezed Joe’s hand again, lifting it carefully to kiss the knuckles.

“Hey, honey. How are you really? Are you in any pain?” Doug asked as he leaned over to nuzzle Joe’s hand and land another kiss.

“Naw, my drugs are good. Are you really okay, Doug?” Doug nodded as he sat back up, wincing at the movement. He let go of Joe’s hand and Joe immediately missed the connection.

“Yes, especially compared to you. I’m going to be sore for a few weeks, but nothing was broken. Do you know what happened to you?” Doug asked, making sure that Joe knew what was what.

“Mostly. Stitches in my arm and side, nothing badly damaged, and a cracked collarbone. I’m gonna have to have physical therapy, I guess.”

“We were lucky, Joe. So damned lucky.” Doug held his hand over his eyes, but Joe could see the tears running down his cheeks.

“Oh, baby, don’t cry. We came out okay, and they’ll catch the one who got away. Thanks for taking out the guy with the pipe. I think you saved my life.”

Doug leaned over, putting his face on the mattress while wrapping his free arm around his body. He was being quiet, but Joe knew that he was still upset. Joe slowly lifted his cut arm, flinching as he put his hand on top of Doug’s head. He rested his hand there, wishing he could pull Doug into his arms. He was frustrated with both arms out of commission, needing to feel Doug next to him, alive and well. That may not happen soon, though, since his left arm was in a sling and bound to his body, and his right one was pretty sore and on the same side as his knife wound.

“God, I love you, Doug. I love you so fucking much.” Doug lifted his head up, making Joe’s arm slide off. “Aaaahhhh,” Joe couldn’t help groaning, feeling the sharp pain as it hit the bed.

“Shit, Joe. I’m so sorry. You okay?”

Joe nodded, smiling weakly at his lover. His arm ached like hell and it had jarred his collarbone and his side, but he wasn’t going to make Doug feel even worse.

“I love you too, Joe,” Doug said. He stood and carefully leaned over to kiss Joe, softly at first. Joe ran his tongue over Doug’s lips, feeling where his man had been gnawing at the bottom one. Doug opened and welcomed Joe in, leaning on his arms to keep himself at the right level and to relieve some pressure off his sore ribs. “Shit, I can’t do it. It hurts too much,” Doug said in disgust.

“Sit down, baby. Relax. We’ve got lots of time together over the next few weeks while we heal. We can talk and figure things out. Right now I just want to rejoice in the fact that we’re both safe and together.”

Doug nodded in agreement. “We are. I almost lost you tonight. I’m not leaving you, Joe, ever. We’ll work this out together, and even get professional help if we need to. I’ll do anything, Joe.” Doug wiped his face and blew his nose with a tissue from Joe’s bedside table.

“So will I, Doug.” Joe smiled at his husband, and drifted off to sleep holding Doug’s hand, content to be with him. Joe knew he would do anything in his power to fix this marriage. Life without Doug would not be any kind of life, and tonight had re-enforced that fact. In spades. Love *would* conquer all.

The End

Author Bio

Jonathan Treadway is the pseudonym of Jennifer Swanson, who lives with her husband in northern Massachusetts. Her daughter is in college way too far away from home. Jen has a professional job doing market analysis (and commuting, it seems like) during the day, and writes in the evenings and on weekends when the spirit takes her. Her stories focus on the romance and relationship between two men, and all the trials gay men have to survive in order to have a healthy, happily-ever-after (or for now) relationship. To her there's nothing sexier than two men exploring each other physically and emotionally as they fall in love. When Jen's not writing or reading the embarrassingly large number of ebooks she buys every month to support her Kindle habit, she's quilting, dancing at gay bars, or playing with her bunny Annabelle.

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