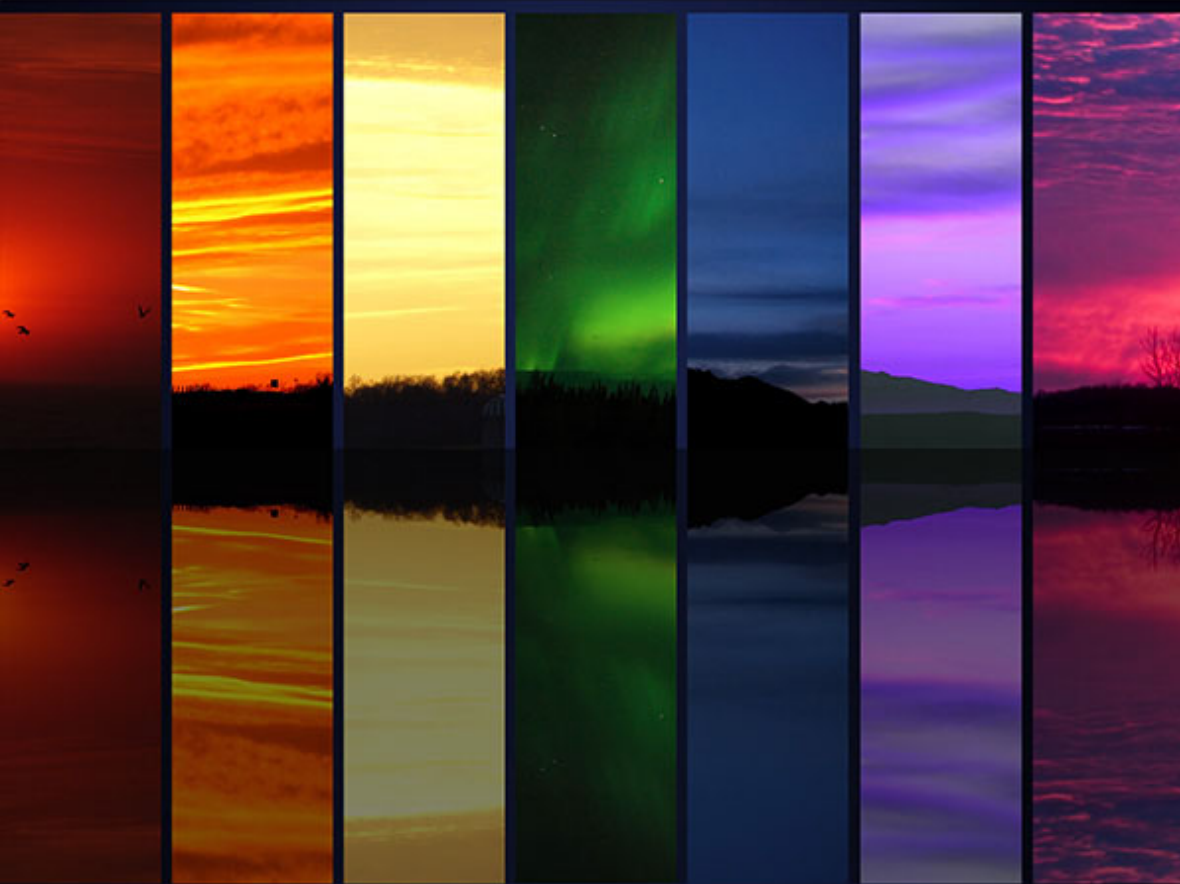


LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

TOUCHING NARCISSUS

Jamie Fessenden

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

TOUCHING NARCISSUS

By Jamie Fessenden

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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TOUCHING NARCISSUS

By Jamie Fessenden

Photo Description

The picture is of the Brewer Twins. One is sneaking up behind the other, putting his hands over his brother's eyes. They're both shirtless, and it appears to be nighttime.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

They say everyone has a doppelganger out there and I have found mine. He is beautiful, he is perfect, he is... me. The mirror image of myself in every way and I want him. I think he wants me. I pretended to be someone else online and planned a blind date/hook up for him, for us, telling him every detail of will happen. I told him when he got to the destination to take off his shirt and wait. Will he accept or reject me when he sees me, himself, reflected back when he opens his eyes?

Please give us our story. Tell me what happens and where we go from here. An HEA/HFN is fine. Kink/BDSM is fine. (Please no sci-fi or paranormal and nothing alien.)

Sincerely,

Sara

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: doppelganger, obsession, grad student, businessman, deception

Word Count: 14,311

TOUCHING NARCISSUS

By Jamie Fessenden

Chapter One

The first time I saw myself was in the window of Popovers on the Square. No, I don't mean my reflection. My reflection was right in front of me, eyes wide and mouth gaping like a startled guppy, and like me it was staring at the young man inside the café. He was reading a paperback and sipping a cappuccino, completely oblivious to the fact that he was being watched. His face was handsome in a boyish way—not pretty, like some of the really beautiful guys I know, but not rugged, either. Just... soft, round-cheeked, with a full, sensuous mouth. He had thick, golden blond hair, swept back from a high forehead and tucked behind his ears. I couldn't see his eyes from this distance, but I was willing to bet they were sky blue, just like mine.

Because he was *me*. It wasn't just that he looked a lot like me. He looked *exactly* like me.

It was the weirdest feeling. Like looking in a mirror, except that he was moving, and I wasn't. I watched him finish his cappuccino, tuck his book into his backpack, and stand up, all while I stood motionless, locked in place.

“Are you going in?” a voice said behind me, making me jump. I hadn't even noticed Rob's reflection in the window until he spoke.

I turned slowly to face him, as if waking up from a deep sleep. “I, uh... yeah, I'm going in.”

“Well, come on.” Rob was grinning at me, his red hair blowing around his head in the wind that always seemed to be blowing in Portsmouth, coming off the harbor and mixing the smell of saltwater and seaweed in with the exhaust of the traffic. We'd arranged to meet here for lunch. Usually, I would have grabbed a table by now.

I glanced back at the window and the tables inside the café, but I was dismayed to find the guy I'd been so enthralled with gone. I looked at the door, and there he was, walking away from us, carrying his backpack slung over one shoulder. For a moment, I had a strong impulse to push my way past Rob and chase after him, but he'd already stepped out onto Congress Street, and by the time I could catch up to him, the next wave of cars would have overtaken me. It's a one-way street, and crossing it at rush hour is a matter of waiting until a window opens when the lights two blocks down change. I'd missed my window.

I thought about shouting out to him, but I had no idea what I'd say.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Rob asked. He glanced over his shoulder to see what I was looking at, but of course he just saw traffic and random pedestrians.

"Nothing," I said. "Let's get a table."

"He was *gorgeous!*"

Rob laughed. And he definitely wasn't laughing with me—he was laughing at me. "Colin... you just said he looked exactly like you. Now you're saying he's gorgeous? How vain is that?"

The girl at the table next to us was looking at us funny, so I lowered my voice. "I do think I'm good looking," I admitted, "but it's not like I spend my day jerking off in front of the mirror, or something. I just... seeing him like that... seeing *me*... I can't describe it."

"I can describe it," Rob said, leaning over his salted caramel latte. "You're a sick man with a narcissistic complex. You probably have a secret stash of twincest books."

I stared back at him coldly. Sure, I might have read one or... four... books with twins in them, but so did a lot of people. That didn't make me sick. "You're just mad because I won't sleep with you," I replied.

Rob didn't dignify that with a response. He made a rude noise with his lips, and then took a sip of his latte. Truthfully, he didn't have more than a passing interest in me, and we both knew it. He'd chased me for a brief time, when we first met, but that had been years ago. Now we were comfortable with each other.

Rob was right that I was a little vain. I worked out, I had a close, personal relationship with my hair stylist, I had a drink named after me at our local juice bar... In other words, I cared about my appearance, and it showed. I'd considered being a model, when I was in high school, but I knew myself too well. A little flattery and those shirtless shoots would turn into pants-less shoots. Then underwear shots would become "tasteful nudes." Before long, my modeling career would be a porn career.

So, I went into business management instead. Now, a couple years out of college, I was a low-level manager at Top Circle Security Corporation in Portsmouth, NH, and... well, let's just say I was doing pretty well for myself.

Rob was a shift supervisor working under me, which was another reason we couldn't date.

I took a sip of my green tea and set it down. "I want to find out who he is."

"You want to stalk him."

I gave Rob a sour look. "I'm not going to *stalk* him. I'm just going to use a little Google-fu... see what I can track down."

"In other words... stalk him."

I took another sip of tea and tried to pretend I was alone at the table. But Rob wouldn't let it rest. "We might be able to clear this up right now," he said.

He stood up and walked over to the counter, motioning to the barista. "Did you see my friend come in here about a half hour ago?" He pointed at me. "He might have been wearing different clothes."

The guy looked uncomfortable. "Why?"

"I just want to know if he was in here earlier."

"Why don't you ask him?" The guy knew something weird was going on—he just had no idea what—and the café probably didn't pay him enough for this kind of crap.

But another barista—a young woman who'd made the dubious fashion choice of sky blue lipstick that morning—rescued him. "I saw him, or someone who looked just like him. In a light brown sweater." She approached the counter and leaned over it to talk directly to me. "What's the deal? Are you twins?"

"He's my stunt double," I replied.

She laughed and looked as if she wanted to ask me something else, but Rob interrupted. "Do you know the other guy's name?"

"No," she said, shaking her head. "First time I've seen him in here."

I had a couple meetings back-to-back, when we returned to work. But as soon as I had a few free minutes, I tackled Google. I didn't have much to go by but appearance, so I tried Image Search. Obviously, I didn't have a picture of the guy, but that hardly seemed like a problem. I just used one of mine that I'd posted on Facebook. But as soon as I tried it, I realized my mistake. Google Image Search immediately located the picture—on my Facebook page.

I scanned down the list the search had returned, but it was pretty much all references to me for a couple pages, before it disintegrated into useless stuff. If this was going to work, I'd have to try a picture I hadn't already posted. Unfortunately, I had work to do, and IT would start to wonder what I was up to if I kept using company web access to search for pictures of myself on Google. So, I put it aside for the rest of the day.

When I got home that evening, I nuked a frozen dinner and ate it in front of Teen Wolf, trying to pretend I wasn't obsessed with tracking my look-alike down. But as soon as the show was over, I tossed the dinner tray in the trash and went back to the computer. I figured I'd have to try some photos of myself that had never been posted online if I wanted to have a chance of getting some hits that weren't actually me. Unfortunately, I didn't have many—some high school pictures which were probably too young-looking, some old photos from college...

The college photos turned up nothing, except for my awful yearbook picture. That brought up the same picture on the UNH website. Not helpful. My high school pics were more interesting, in that one of them matched up with a cute Czechoslovakian model on a gay porn site. That was flattering, but again, not helpful. I bookmarked the site and moved on.

I had one option left. If none of my existing photos brought up a match, I could take a few new ones. I didn't have a webcam, because... well, I'd always been afraid of what I'd do with it. If somebody hot started chatting with me online, it probably wouldn't take all that much to flatter me out of my clothes. And I had nightmares about some disgruntled employee stumbling across nude photos of me and posting them. We had an internal site where people could post pictures from company picnics and quarterly meetings—all that whacky, fun stuff that goes on in corporations. Wouldn't it just be terrific, if a few pictures of my dick showed up on it?

Yeah... no career-killing Anthony Weiner stunts for me, thanks.

I did own a digital camera. Since it wasn't normally attached to my computer, I considered it reasonably safe. I found it in the drawer of a small side table in the living room, and spent a couple minutes looking around the apartment for a completely blank wall to use as a backdrop. I assumed the more generic the photo was the better. It turned out I didn't have a blank wall, so I removed a couple art prints from my living room wall. I also didn't have a tripod, so I propped the camera up on a bookcase across the room, aiming it at the wall and zooming in a bit.

I remembered the guy had been wearing a brown sweater and jeans at the café, so I found a similar “ensemble” in my dresser and put it on. Then I spent about ten minutes setting the timer on the camera and scurrying across the room to pose before the flash went off. That gave me six pictures to try.

Nada. No matches for any of them.

I sat there for a minute, playing with the zoom on the camera and feeling annoyed. I was zooming in and out on my crotch, when the thought of taking some dick pics popped into my head. As I said, me plus a digital camera generally equals a bad idea. I have too strong an exhibitionist streak. It occurred to me, though, that loading an image into Google Image Search wasn't necessarily the same as putting it online... was it?

I had to admit I wasn't sure. Google wasn't exactly the safest company to trust with personal data. But what if my lookalike had a profile on a hookup site? The only pictures he might have on there could be nudes, or at least shirtless. I decided to risk taking a couple shirtless pictures. As long as I had my jeans on, they wouldn't be completely embarrassing, if someone dug them up. I hoped.

So that's what I did. I did give into the temptation to snap a couple of nudes, but I erased them from the camera as soon as I downloaded them, and then deleted them from the hard drive after I'd looked at them. I loaded the best picture with jeans on into Image Search, and was shocked when it returned a result from gay.com, one of the common hookup sites. I had a login on the site which I was surprised to discover hadn't been deactivated, even though I'd never filled in my profile. The fact that I could login allowed me to look at the profile I'd found in my search.

The shirtless man in the picture wasn't me, but even I couldn't tell us apart. He was looking into the camera with his head tilted down slightly, his eyes smoldering under an angry brow. His hands were thrust into his pants pockets.

The profile said he was a grad student at UNH, studying literature, living in Dover, which was on the bus route between Portsmouth and the university. He didn't list his actual birthday, but he did list the year. We were the same age. No last name in his profile. Just... Joshua.

I'd found him.

Chapter Two

I hadn't really thought about what I'd do if I managed to find the guy online. A glance at the clock showed me I'd spent close to five hours tracking down the identity of a complete stranger, simply because I'd been fascinated by his appearance when I got a glimpse of him in a café.

Rob was right. I was a stalker.

Christ. It was two o'clock in the morning, and I'd just succeeded in totally creeping myself out. Not to mention that I had to be up at seven, in order to make it to work on time. I bookmarked Joshua's profile and shut the computer down. Then I went to bed.

I had a bizarre dream about stripping naked in front of a mirror. I stared at my nude body in the reflection for a long while, caressing myself with my hands, exploring the solid muscles of my chest, rubbing my palms over my nipples until they grew hard and made me twitch with every touch. I slid one hand down the taut muscles of my abdomen, and through my pubic hair, searching for my rapidly swelling cock. But as I stroked myself, something odd happened. My reflection began to move on its own, drawing closer to the mirror, still stroking. Fascinated, I approached. When my reflection leaned forward, placing its lips against the glass, I did so too, until we were nearly touching, our kiss separated by a thin barrier of cool glass. The barrier melted away until I felt warm, soft lips against mine, and hot, panting breath filled my mouth.

I woke up in the throes of an orgasm, my seed spilling from my painfully swollen cock onto the bed sheets. In the back of my mind, part of me was freaking out about the mess I was creating, but it felt so fantastic, so *beautiful*, I just lay there, writhing in pleasure, letting it happen.

Sheets can be washed.

The next morning sucked. I was dead tired and took so long to drag my ass out of bed that I didn't have time for much more than coffee before I had to rush off to a morning meeting. My team's stats had been slipping recently, so the VP kept making snide comments about how "sleepy" I was. I practically had to go down on him in front of the other supervisors in order to appease him.

I spent the rest of the morning in my office, in too pissy a mood to speak to anyone. Rob came around at lunch time with Chinese takeout, bless him. I could eat in peace without interacting with anybody—except for him, of course. But Rob didn't count. We'd shared a room for years, gotten drunk together, and cried over breakups in front of each other. He'd already seen me at my worst, bad hair, morning breath, and all. He wasn't going to be chased off by a case of morning grumpiness.

It didn't take him long to pry out of me that I'd been up all night, and he quickly deduced the reason. "Jesus! You were searching for that guy online, weren't you?"

I didn't answer. But my silence, as I pretended to notice something food-like in my General Tso's chicken, confirmed his suspicions.

"Well," Rob asked with a sigh, "did you find him or not?"

"I did."

"Great! Has he taken out a restraining order yet?"

I looked up at him and attempted to glare, but I didn't really have the energy for it. "All I did was track down his profile on gay.com. I didn't try to contact him."

"But you're going to."

"Why not?" I asked. "Now that I've *found* his profile, it's no different from anyone *else* finding his profile, is it?"

Rob laughed and scooped the rest of the pork fried rice we were sharing out onto his Styrofoam plate. "Stalker."

"Seriously—"

"Stalker, stalker!"

"—I'll just fill out my profile, and contact him like anyone else on the site."

"Stalker, stalker, stalker!"

I ignored Rob, for the most part. I did make up my mind not to be "creepy" when I talked to Joshua. But then, that was never a good approach anyway. The first step, when I got home that evening, was to fill out my profile. It was possible to contact someone on the site with a half-assed profile, but guys who did that were generally just looking for sex, rather than anything long-lasting.

And Joshua's profile expressly said, "Looking for something lasting. Not interested in a hookup."

So, fine. "Lasting" sounded good to me. As long as there was sex somewhere in the mix.

I could have tailored my profile to match his as closely as possible, of course. He said he liked reading and old black-and-white movies, so I could have put down the same thing. But I'd dated guys like that, who always loved everything you loved... until they'd fucked you a couple times. Then it quickly became clear you had nothing in common, and the relationship tanked after that. That wasn't what I was looking for.

I decided to put as much accurate detail in my profile as possible, keeping in mind that other guys could see it too. I wrote in my home town as Portsmouth, but no street address, and didn't give the specific company I worked for. Also, no phone number. Joshua hadn't listed one either, which spoke well for his intelligence. Or at least it meant he wasn't a complete moron. For interests, I listed computers, science-fiction, online-gaming, working out, clothes shopping, gourmet food, and a host of other things. Some of them overlapped Joshua's interests, some didn't. I thought about removing "online-gaming," in case he'd be afraid I was one of those guys who actually thought he was an orc, or something like that. But in the interest of honesty, I left it. Though I did add the word "moderate" in front of it.

I balked at putting a picture of myself on the profile. Although a user had to have an account on the site in order to see another user's profile, anybody could view the pictures. And by "anybody," I was thinking "coworkers." Besides, if I posted a real picture of myself, Joshua might think it was a prank—that somebody had Photoshopped his face onto another body or something. It might be better to get to know him, before saying, "Surprise! We look exactly alike!"

On the other hand, a profile without a picture wouldn't get me anywhere. So I decided to lie a little on that point. I searched online for a generic picture of a blond guy who matched my description. Nothing too slick—I hadn't claimed to be a model, so I wouldn't be likely to have professional head shots. I found something that looked like a family photo, and snagged it. The guy was my age and good-looking, without seeming unreal. But as I was about to upload it to the profile, I had an attack of conscience. For all I knew, this guy was married with a family, or studying to be a priest. And here I was, about to attach his face to a gay.com profile for all Internet eternity. That hardly seemed fair. So I tossed that picture and rummaged around in the gay.com photos. Yeah, I'd still

be misrepresenting somebody, but his picture was already on the site. I picked somebody from Oregon, so he'd be less likely to pop up in searches Joshua was doing locally.

Once the profile was complete, I fired off a note to Joshua:

Hey! I saw your picture and looked at your profile. You seem pretty cool, and you're going to my college! Are you still active on this site?

Hopefully, Joshua would find that friendly and non-threatening. Admittedly, it wasn't very intriguing, but if I was judging him correctly, he'd have to be approached slowly. *You look hot*, wouldn't be the right tack. Not for first contact. And neither would, *Let's get together so your ass and my face can get better acquainted!*

After I sent the note, I sat in front of my computer, staring at his picture, until I realized I'd been doing nothing but that for several minutes. I forced myself to shut the stupid computer down and go out to Brewbaker's. That coffee shop stayed open until 1 a.m. during the summer. I didn't need to be up all night again, but it was still early enough for a decaf and some fresh air.

When I got back from the coffee shop, it was just going on eleven. I checked my gay.com profile for messages, and found a couple—but not from Joshua. They were just random guys trying to hook up with me. I deleted them without responding. Judging by the tone of the messages, nobody's feelings would be hurt. They were just prowling for sex. I shut the computer down and went to bed.

Two days later, I still hadn't received a reply to my message. There had been plenty of other messages, only two of which had seemed like sincere attempts to meet for coffee or something non-sexual. I sent them polite brush-offs. The other messages I deleted. If those guys couldn't be bothered to respect the part of my profile that said "Not interested in casual hookups," then they didn't warrant responses.

"Maybe he isn't on the site anymore," Rob pointed out, as I whined to him over Thai food about Joshua's continued silence.

"It's possible," I admitted. After all, I'd only used the site for a short time myself, before growing bored with it. I hadn't been on it in years, and wouldn't have bothered to go back, if it hadn't been for Joshua. He might have forgotten all about it.

Rob sat back in his seat, looking smug. “Maybe you’ll just have to reconcile yourself to not always getting everybody you set your sights on, like the rest of us mere mortals.”

“Me-ow,” I retorted, glaring at him over my chicken satay.

“Sorry, I’ve been re-watching *Queer as Folk* on DVD.”

“Well, go clubbing or something, so you can get it out of your system.”

Chapter Three

It was the next morning—Saturday—after I'd already written the gay.com thing off as a total failure, that I decided to log in one final time and just delete the goddamn profile. I didn't need it lingering in cyberspace with my information on it, sparse though it was. There were seventeen messages, all raunchy attempts to get me interested in a blowjob or a sleazy afternoon romp. It wasn't that I'd never had a down-and-dirty one night stand in my life—I wasn't exactly a shy little virgin. But those days were pretty much behind me. I wasn't sure what I wanted these days, but that wasn't it.

As I was about to dump the lot into the trashcan, I noticed one of the messages said “Reply” on the header. Then I noticed who it was from: Joshua.

I think I had a mild seizure for a moment. I couldn't move. I just stared at my inbox for a long time, before I finally remembered I had a hand, and it was holding a mouse. With a tremendous amount of effort, I willed myself to move the cursor to the message and click on it.

He hadn't said much in response to my message. Just a few words.

Are you a student here?

I could have faked it, of course. I'd been a student until just a couple years ago. But instead, I replied truthfully:

I already graduated. Business major.

My profile listed the year I was born. Hopefully, he'd see that and know I didn't mean I'd graduated the same year as his father, or something.

Would the “business major” part turn him off? What if he was only interested in artistic types? On the other hand, I knew I'd never be able to fake being a literature major for more than a few emails. I'd read a few of the “classics” in high school, but I barely remembered them. And I hated Shakespeare. So I just clicked “Send” and hoped for the best.

To my surprise, the answer came back right away:

Cool. I'm a lit major. Teaching degree.

He was online. Right now.

The site had an instant messaging feature, so I brought that up, hoping he'd be in the mood to chat. I typed in:

Colin90: *hi*

There was a long pause, before the reply came back:

JoshuaF: *Hello.*

Oh. My. God. I was talking to him! Well, almost.

Colin90: *Are you busy?*

I took a hint from his degree of study, and spelled everything out. I suspected abbreviating everything to single letters and numbers wouldn't impress a man fond of the English language. Sort of like torturing his friends in front of him.

JoshuaF: *Just eating breakfast and checking email. Not much going on today.*

Okay, I'm not going to reproduce this entire conversation, because it was basically two guys dancing around each other, asking meaningless questions about whether Pop-tarts qualify as breakfast, and whether food was even necessary, if you had cream and sugar in your coffee. I found out he was on track to graduate with a master's degree next spring, and was hoping to become an associate professor in the English department. He was also working on a novel about life in a small New Hampshire town. I told him—truthfully—that I'd be interested in reading it, when he was finished. I also told him the truth about what I did for work, hoping he wouldn't find it tedious. He seemed to think it was cool that I was doing so well, just a couple years after graduation, which flattered the hell out of me. Certainly, it was a nice change from Rob's constant cynicism.

Something really interesting happened during the conversation—I started to like him. Not just because he looked sexy to me, but because he seemed like a cool guy and had a great sense of humor. Maybe this doesn't seem like such a big deal, but it was really rare for me. Most guys I'd met while I was dating bored the crap out of me, maybe because the conversation rarely got past, "I think you're really hot. What are you into?" Joshua wasn't interested in talking about sex, at least not over breakfast. We were just getting to know each other.

And it was really nice.

Eventually, I looked at the clock and realized how late it was.

Colin90: *Wow! We've been talking for almost three hours! Lol*

JoshuaF: *Really? I should head over to Durham. I have to find a book of contemporary critiques of Marlowe for my thesis.*

I had no idea who Marlowe was, but by this point, Joshua probably knew that. I thought about asking him out to coffee later, but I wasn't sure if we'd progressed to meeting in person. Besides, I wasn't sure if he was ready to learn I'd lied to him about my appearance. Fortunately, he solved my dilemma by saying:

JoshuaF: *I hope to see you around later. I'd love to chat again.*

He wasn't ready to meet in person. So, good. We'd have more time to get to know each other first.

I said:

Colin90: *Cool. Good luck finding that book!*

"I don't fucking believe it!" Rob panted, as we jogged side-by-side on the treadmills at the gym. "If I stalked some guy for a week, I'd end up with the police banging on my door. But you! He just falls right in your lap."

I'd long given up arguing the "stalking" point. "He isn't in my lap," I replied. "We're just chatting online. Even *you* can manage that, once in a while."

"It's all gonna blow up in your face, once he finds out about the picture."

I frowned at him in the mirror in front of us. "You're just dying for that to happen, aren't you?"

"It has amusement potential."

"You know," I said, "you suck as a best friend. You're not at all supportive. You just hang around me so you can laugh when I fall on my face."

Rob just laughed at me. "Oh, stop being so melodramatic. You know I love you."

"Then why do you keep putting me down?" I asked petulantly. "Why can't you be happy for me?"

I regretted that question the moment I asked it. Rob hit the button to bring his treadmill to a stop, so he could turn to face me. Breathing heavily, sweat soaking his T-shirt, he narrowed his eyes and asked, "Happy about *what*? What do you think you have here? True Love? Dude! You hunted this guy down because of the way he *looks*—nothing else. Don't claim there's anything there other than sexual attraction."

“There could be,” I hedged. I knew he was right. At least, for now. But that didn’t mean nothing could come of this, apart from some interesting sex. “He seemed like a really cool guy when I talked to him.”

“Fine.” Rob reached for the towel he’d draped over the railing of his treadmill and mopped the sweat off his face with it. “After you’ve talked to him for a while, maybe fucked him a couple times to get over this weird obsession... If you’re still thinking he’s wonderful then, I’ll reconsider my opinion of this whole twisted... *thing* you’ve got going on.”

He stormed off to the locker room, and I let him go. I still had five minutes on my run, and I needed the time to cool off before I talked to him again. Admittedly, he probably did too.

I wasn’t sure if it would be a good idea to try messaging Joshua when I got home that evening. I didn’t want to scare him off by coming on too strong. But when I checked my gay.com profile, I discovered he’d sent me a message a half hour before, asking if I was around. So I fired off the reply:

Colin90: *Sorry, I was out with a friend. What’s up?*

I expected him to have logged out already, but to my delight, my message window popped up a few seconds later.

JoshuaF: *Hey.*

Colin90: *Hey. How are you?*

JoshuaF: *Fine. Just bored. Were you on a date?*

Colin90: *No, just watching the musical at Prescott Park with a friend.*

Rob and I had stopped snarling at each other long enough to get lunch and go down to the park, where an open-air performance of *The Big Band Broadcast of 1938* was being put on. The show was playing all summer, and we’d seen it twice already, but it was a good way to kill an afternoon.

I was a little afraid Joshua would start hinting that he’d like to see the show. Not that I didn’t want to go with him, but it was too soon for my big unveiling. Fortunately, he didn’t mention it.

JoshuaF: *Cool. I spent the whole day at the library.*

Colin90: *Exciting.*

JoshuaF: *Yeah. :-p*

We talked for a while about random stuff. Nothing big. But I felt completely at ease while we talked—more relaxed than I'd ever been around anyone but Rob. It was very cool. He ended up telling me about his Master's thesis, which was some kind of comparison between Shakespeare and his contemporaries, like Christopher Marlowe, Francis Beaumont, and other people I'd never heard of. Joshua was really enthusiastic about the subject, and he knew a bunch of anecdotes about all of them. Somehow, an hour went by before I realized I'd been completely engrossed in a conversation I normally would have found boring.

Eventually, he messaged:

JoshuaF: *Do you want to talk on the phone?*

Colin90: *Sure.*

A moment later, he messaged me his phone number and I didn't waste a second calling him. The voice on the other end of the line was surprisingly smooth. Not deep, but mellow. "Hey, it's Joshua."

"This is Colin."

"Yeah, I figured that," he said with a resonant laugh. I loved the sound of it.

"It's nice to hear your voice."

"Yours, too. So I wanted to let you know, I'm thinking of deleting my profile off gay.com."

I had a moment of panic. Was he telling me he was going to disappear? "Why?"

"Because in six months, you're the only decent guy who's contacted me. Everyone else has been creepy, or just looking for a quickie—or both."

I laughed. "I know the feeling. I created my profile years ago, but I stopped using it after a few weeks."

"What made you decide to log in again?" he asked.

I went with a half-truth. "The dating scene in Portsmouth kind of dried up for me. I was hoping to meet somebody more interesting."

"Instead, you met a dork with a Shakespeare fetish."

"You have to admit, there aren't many guys in the clubs who could say that." He laughed again, and I couldn't stop myself from saying, "I love the sound of your laugh."

“Thanks. I love your laugh too,” he said. “Your voice, in general. It sounds... I don’t know. Relaxing. Like I’ve known you forever.” He paused a moment, before continuing, “Anyway, I’ll probably yank the profile tomorrow. I’m sick of deleting mail from sleazebags. And you have my number now.”

“Yeah,” I replied, relieved that he wasn’t cutting me off. “I like this better.”

“Me, too.”

We ended up talking until past midnight. The temptation to ask him to meet up somewhere tomorrow was strong, but again I resisted. Things still felt too tentative to spring my surprise on him. In some ways, it didn’t seem as if it was all that big a deal. I’d lied about my appearance, and I didn’t really look like the picture on my profile. But I was still good-looking. It wasn’t like I was some disgusting troll hiding behind the picture of a model, like a bunch of the guys on the site.

Still, I had the feeling Joshua would be pissed when he found out. He seemed like a very straightforward, honest guy, and he was looking for the same qualities in me. I’d dug myself a hole, and I wasn’t sure how I’d manage to get out of it.

Chapter Four

The phone chats went on for about a week, until it had become a comfortable routine for me. I'd come home each night, have dinner, and then give Joshua a call. It was almost as if we were dating, except that we hadn't seen each other face-to-face yet. I thought about it, and perhaps Joshua did too. But neither of us suggested getting together. I wasn't sure why he hesitated, but I knew my reason—I was afraid everything would fall apart, if I moved too fast.

It almost blew up on me on Sunday afternoon. I'd arranged to meet Rob at Barnes & Noble for coffee, and then we were planning on hitting some other stores in the mall. I arrived a few minutes late, but that wasn't usually a big deal. Rob loved hanging out in the bookshop, and if he'd gotten bored he would have called me. Since he hadn't, I'd assumed everything was fine.

I soon discovered that wasn't exactly true.

Rob was fine. It was what he was *doing* that I had a problem with. As I approached the café, I saw him sitting at a table. There was a man sitting opposite him, and Rob was talking with him—or maybe *at* him would be more precise, since he was jabbering away and waving a book he'd picked up. The man at the table watched him in silence, as if he had no idea what to make of his companion. I couldn't see the guy's face, at first, but he was blond, and when he glanced to the side a moment, my blood went ice cold.

It was Joshua.

And Rob, the moron, was talking to him as if they were old friends—as if he was *me*!

Fuck me!

I stopped at one of the magazine racks near the entrance to the café and pulled out my cell phone. With one eye on the back of Joshua's head, so I could turn away if he looked in my direction, I texted Rob's phone:

that isn't me u idiot!

Rob stopped talking and looked annoyed as he started fishing in his pocket for the phone. I watched him look at the display and scowl. He glanced up at Joshua a second, and then back at his phone. I willed him to notice that, firstly, the text had come from me, and, secondly, the guy sitting in front of him hadn't sent it. *Come on, Rob! Use those neurons!*

He glanced at the cell phone again, and then looked around the room. A second later, he spotted me—the *real* me—and his face blanched. Apparently, Joshua noticed his odd change of expression, because he turned to see what Rob was looking at. I ducked down hurriedly, pretending to be fascinated by a magazine on the lowest shelf. I stayed there until I heard Rob's voice above me saying, "Jesus Christ, Colin!"

"Is he still looking this way?" I asked.

"No," Rob replied. "I told him I had a sudden emergency and booked it out of there. He's gone back to reading."

Good. But it still wasn't safe for me to be in the café. I needed to get out of there, pronto. "Come on!"

I stood up and marched away from the café, not stopping until we were completely outside the bookstore. "What did you tell him?" I asked.

Rob shook his head, his jaw hanging open in astonishment. "Nothing! I just sat down and started talking about Cory Doctorow's new book—the one I told you about a few days ago."

I noticed he wasn't carrying the book anymore. "Where's the book? You didn't just walk out of the store with it, did you?"

"I left it on the table," he said impatiently. "Jesus, Colin! He looks exactly like you!"

"So I've been telling you."

"I don't mean a *lot* like you, except he has a bigger nose or crooked teeth or something. He looks *exactly* like you. I wouldn't be able to tell you apart in a line-up."

I confess I thought he was being a bit slow. Hadn't we already been talking about this for weeks? It annoyed me that he hadn't believed me, when I'd told him all of this before. "You didn't call him 'Colin,' did you?" Joshua wasn't stupid. He would certainly connect that with the fact that *my* name was Colin. At least, I assumed he would. It was hard to imagine what he'd think, exactly.

Rob shook his head again. "No. I just said 'hey' and started talking about the book."

Thank God. Joshua would probably just assume Rob had mistaken him for someone else—which was the truth, of course—and chalk it up to Rob not being very observant. That stuff happens all the time.

But I didn't have any desire to tempt fate again. "Come on," I said. "Let's get away from here before he comes out."

"So, if things don't work out between you two," Rob said, an evil smile quirking up the corners of his mouth, "do you mind if I ask him out? I still have some kinky fantasies left over from the days when I had a crush on you."

"God! No, you pervert."

Rob snorted. "Like you're one to talk."

I wasn't actually bothered by whatever sex fantasies Rob might have about me—I doubted there would be anything really shocking there. I knew all about his sexual escapades, just as he knew all about mine, and he was pretty vanilla. I also wasn't bothered by his crass joke about hitting on Joshua, if things didn't work out for me. He was just trying to get a rise out of me. Mostly, anyway.

But Joshua nearly finding out that I looked like him? That freaked me out. And it made me realize I wouldn't be able to keep my appearance a secret from him for much longer. Portsmouth wasn't that big a city—just about thirty-thousand people. We'd already bumped into each other twice in just under two weeks. Well... I'd bumped into *him*. And eventually he might see me.

That night, Joshua called and told me about meeting Rob in the café. Of course, he didn't know Rob's name or that I knew him. "It was kind of funny," Joshua said, "but totally surreal. He just sat down and started talking as if we were old friends."

"Weird," I said.

"I never even found out what his name was. He got a text and said he had to go. Then he took off."

"That's fucked up." Then, because I thought it was something I was expected to ask, I said, "Was he cute?"

Joshua thought about it. "He was okay, I guess. I wouldn't say he was unattractive..."

But obviously, Joshua didn't find Rob to be drop-dead gorgeous. I felt like an asshole—what kind of friend is happy someone doesn't find you attractive?—but... I was relieved to hear it. I didn't need the added complication.

Still, it had been way too close for comfort.

It was time to figure out how Joshua and I could meet in a way I had some control over. I didn't want to tell him over the phone, "Oh, hey! I forgot to mention we look like twins. My gay.com profile? No, that was a lie." He'd hang up on me, and I'd never get a chance to meet him face-to-face. I was hoping he'd be willing to forgive the faked photo, once he saw me.

Yes, I know. My life had turned into a seventies sitcom.

Portsmouth had an outdoor stage in Prescott Park, right near the harbor, and the Prescott Arts Festival put on a musical of some kind every summer. It ran for weeks, which got a little tedious if you were in the area a lot, but it was a pleasant way to spend the evening. Admission was cheap, if you wanted to be near the stage, or free, if you just wanted to walk around the park and listen in occasionally on the musical numbers. I thought it would be a perfect spot for us to meet. There were plenty of people around, if he was concerned about meeting a relative stranger at night, but still a lot of places in the park we could go to be alone. Not exactly let's-have-sex alone, but certainly alone enough to talk, kiss, make out...

Unfortunately, Joshua seemed less than ecstatic about the idea. "I've still got a lot of work to do on my thesis..."

Okay. I knew a bullshit answer when I heard it. His thesis wasn't due for about six months. "You don't want to actually meet in person, do you?" I said.

There was a long silence on the other end of the phone. Then I heard him take a deep breath and say, "I guess I... I just kind of like what we've got going here. I have someone to call up and chat with before bed every night. It's kind of nice."

"Yes, it is," I answered. "But I don't see why that would have to change."

"It would, though. Whenever two people meet face-to-face... two people who met on a *dating* site, anyway... they're kind of expecting it will lead to something. You know?"

"Yes, I know."

"I think you're really nice, Colin—"

Oh, shit, I thought. Couldn't we at least have one date, before he brushed me off?

"—and you have a really sexy voice. But... I don't know how to say this without sounding mean..."

“Just say it,” I said. I tried not to sound curt, but I didn’t really succeed.

“You have a nice body in your profile pic,” he said, “and you’re good-looking. But I’m not sure I’m really attracted to you that way. I’m sorry.”

That was an interesting twist. On the one hand, I didn’t really care if he found my profile picture attractive, since it wasn’t a picture of me. On the other hand, I’d selected that picture, because it looked a *little* like me. What if he hated blonds? Or what if I—and the guy in my picture—just wasn’t Joshua’s “type?” What if he liked skinny, dark-haired computer nerds with glasses?

“Look,” I said slowly, “that’s fine. So we won’t call this a date. We’ll just state right up front that we’re getting together to hang out as friends. Okay?”

It took me a while longer to convince him. Honestly, when I’d said we’d keep it strictly friendly, I was lying. I don’t mean I was going to pounce on him, or pressure him to “put out” or anything like that. But of course I was hoping he *would* be attracted to me, when he finally saw me.

Assuming he didn’t punch me in the face.

At any rate, he eventually agreed to meet me at Prescott Park that Friday at nine o’clock. The performance would already be underway by then, but Joshua insisted he couldn’t get away any earlier than that. It didn’t really matter. I’d seen the show a few times already, and it was just an excuse to finally meet him.

“Should we wear pink carnations in our lapels, or something?” Joshua teased.

“I usually go to these park performances naked,” I replied. Then I mentally kicked myself. Hadn’t I just agreed to keep it platonic?

But the joke didn’t seem to put him off. He laughed. “I’m not going to show up naked, but if the weather stays this hot, I might take my shirt off.”

“Shirtless is good,” I said.

Shirtless would be *very* good.

Chapter Five

Friday night was, in fact, hot and humid as hell. I wasn't sure if Joshua had been serious about showing up shirtless to the park, but I was hoping so. I got hard every time I thought about it.

I had dinner with Rob at the Friendly Toast. It was kind of an odd combination of health food and greasy spoon, with menu items that had no business tasting good, but did—quesadillas with brie and sliced green apple, burgers with avocado and balsamic vinegar. All of this was served in an atmosphere of sixties and seventies kitsch by cute college students with bad attitudes. It was one of our favorite cheap restaurants.

But after dinner I had to tell Rob to buzz off. "I can't let him see you with me," I explained. "Not yet."

"You're just afraid he'll choose me over you," Rob retorted.

I didn't tell him Joshua had already declared him uninteresting. No sense in being mean. Besides, I knew he was just giving me shit. "We'll get together later, have a good laugh, and then a massive three-way," I told him.

"I'll hold you to that."

He ended up calling Ray, the last guy he'd dated, to see if he wanted to go out to a movie. Knowing the way their relationship worked, I had no doubt they'd end up in bed together at the end of the night. I confess the thought made me a little jealous. I doubted things would work out *that* well for me and Joshua tonight, even if he didn't tell me to go away and never call him again.

But I quickly forgot about Rob's plans as I headed down Congress Street toward the park. It was a beautiful evening, hot and balmy, and the sunset had just faded into twilight. By the time I reached Dos Amigos on State Street, I could hear the music coming from the park a few blocks away—a kick-ass rendition of "Stuff Like That There," sung by a young woman with amazing energy. It was one of my favorite songs in the show.

A moment later, my phone vibrated in my pocket. It was Joshua.

"I got here a little early," he said, shouting over the music. "Where are you?"

"I'm on my way. I'll be there in a few minutes." The music wasn't loud where I was, but I had to shout back in order for him to hear me.

“All right. Call me when you get here.”

I walked the remaining distance to the end of State Street and crossed Marcy Street to enter the park. The stage was near the Southern Pier, so I trotted along the red brick path toward the small building that housed the concession stand and public restrooms as the singer belted out her finale. I slowed down and dialed Joshua back when the applause died down, hoping to catch him for a moment before the next song started.

“I’m here,” I said. I was approaching the edge of the crowd, and my eyes searched for him, but there were a dozen shirtless men near me, and a lot more, farther in.

Ah, summer...

“It was too loud near the stage,” he replied. “I’m out on the pier.” He laughed. “And you got your wish. I’ve been sweating so much I had to take my shirt off.”

“Nice.”

I couldn’t see the pier from this angle. I’d have to go around the outskirts of the crowd, unless I wanted to waste money paying for a ticket, so I could plow through the sea of bodies. The band was starting their next number.

“Stay there! I’ll be there in a minute.”

I circled around behind the ticket booth and followed the water’s edge. There was a ship coming into the harbor, and the bridge was slowly rising to let it pass. The entire middle section was hoisted up by two vertical towers to let the ship slide underneath it, and at night, with rows of lights illuminating the entire structure, it was spectacular to watch. That’s what Joshua was doing, when I saw him—looking out across the water, watching the bridge rise.

We were still a fair distance apart, and he hadn’t seen me yet. But I knew him instantly. It was like looking at myself in a dream, somehow removed from my body, with the song “Night and Day” echoing across the field, sung by a beautiful tenor voice, and the lights of the bridge shimmering like stars in the water. Joshua was wearing jeans and naked from the waist up. I found my cock swelling at the sight of his muscular back and arms.

I removed my shirt and tucked it into the waistband of my jeans, exactly as he’d done. Then I called him again. “Don’t turn around.”

“What?”

He started to turn, so I said quickly, "Don't!"

He hesitated. "Why?"

"I can see you from where I am," I said. "But I don't want you to turn around until I say so."

"You're planning on pushing me off the pier, aren't you?" he said, but his voice sounded amused.

"That's it. This whole thing has been an elaborate ruse to get you wet." He'd hardly die from a fifteen-foot drop into saltwater, even if wasn't particularly pleasant. Although the thought of him wet did have its appeal.

"I don't know if I trust you."

"We've known each other for two weeks now. You can trust me for five minutes."

He thought about it a long time, before replying, "All right. Fine."

I hung up. To make sure he wouldn't catch me in his peripheral vision, I ducked back toward the crowd, and then came at the pier from the park flower gardens. That placed me completely behind Joshua, as long as he kept his word and didn't turn around. The pier was made of wood, so it would have been difficult to disguise my footsteps, but we weren't the only people out there. A few others drifted along the railings, watching the bridge or talking softly. Still, I walked softly as I approached Joshua. The thought that I might touch him in a moment had my cock straining painfully at my fly, making me desperate to unzip and set it free. I struggled to keep my breathing calm and silent.

Then I was standing behind him, so close I could feel the heat from his naked back against my torso. He tensed his muscles, and I knew he'd sensed my presence. I heard him draw in a quick, soft breath. Then I leaned forward, until his soft blond hair tickled my cheek, and I could smell a faint mixture of sweat and sandalwood.

I whispered in his ear, "I'm here."

Joshua gasped and said softly, "I know," before he turned to look at me. He was smiling for a moment, but as his eyes looked into mine, I saw the smile fade into a look of confusion. I stepped back, reluctantly, wanting to lean in closer but knowing he needed to see me clearly. The furrow between his brows deepened as he looked me up and down. "What's going on?"

"Nothing's going on," I replied. "This is me. Colin."

“Colin...” It was as if he didn’t understand what I was saying.

I laughed gently. “You were just talking to me. You know my voice by now.”

“I know your face, too,” Joshua said, but he didn’t look pleased. “It doesn’t look much like the picture on your profile.”

I shrugged, giving him an embarrassed half-smile. “I’m sorry. I thought... if I put my own picture up there, you’d just think it was a joke.”

Joshua nodded slowly. “So, what? You saw a profile on gay.com that looked like... Christ, we could be brothers—*twins*...”

“Yes.”

“And your first thought was try to *date* me?”

He looked utterly disgusted by the idea, which was like a huge bucket of cold water being splashed right in my face. I’d thought he would be excited when he saw how much we looked alike. But it was going horribly wrong. “I thought... I thought it was really hot...”

“So you led me on for the last two weeks, hoping you’d eventually get into my pants.”

That wasn’t fair, and it kind of pissed me off. “I saw your profile on a *dating* site,” I said, frowning at him. “Sure, it was obvious you wanted to get to know each other before we met, and I was prepared to back off, if you said you weren’t interested. But you can’t blame me for hoping you *would* be interested. Everybody who meets up on dating sites hopes for that.”

“We look like brothers!”

“But we’re not!”

We’d drawn some attention by now. Several eyes had turned in our direction. To the onlookers, we probably did look like twins having an argument. I could only imagine what they must have been thinking, with the things we were shouting at each other.

But the argument was over now. Joshua shook his head and said, “I’m going home.”

With that, he walked past me, the hot skin of his naked shoulder brushing against mine—a taste of a passionate evening that would never come to pass, of

a potential relationship already cut short. I couldn't think of anything to say or do to bring him back, so I just watched him walk away.

I was far too miserable to stay for the rest of the concert. Joshua had been within inches of me. I'd whispered in his ear, we'd even bumped shoulders. But that was as far as it had gone, and it would go no further. I'd never been so utterly turned on by anyone in my entire life, and now he was gone. Worse, I was already feeling the loss of those hours-long conversations with him, nearly every day for a couple of weeks. It wasn't just that I'd thought he was hot. I'd *liked* him. A *lot*.

My life had just taken a catastrophic turn for the worse, so I decided to do what most people did when life sucked—go home and crawl into bed for the next year. Since I hadn't brought my car, that meant walking across town first. Fortunately, my apartment was only about a forty-five minute walk from the park.

I let myself in and shucked my blue jeans, tossing them and my shirt over the arm of the sofa. I tried to watch television for a bit, but nothing interested me at all. I ended up lying on the couch in my underwear, listening to the most depressing music I had loaded on Squeezebox while I stared at the ceiling.

I was utterly pathetic.

I laid there for what must have been a couple hours, until my bladder finally forced me to get up. When I came back from the bathroom, I noticed an odd buzzing sound causing an annoying dissonance in Concrete Blonde's "Mexican Moon." It took a moment to realize it was my cell phone, vibrating in the pocket of my jeans.

Fucking Rob. The last thing I needed right now was to hear about how he just got laid.

I let it go to voicemail. But a second later, it started buzzing again.

"Damn you, Rob!" I shouted, pulling the phone out to shut it off. But it wasn't Rob. It was Joshua.

I rocketed up from despair to elation, pulled an illegal u-turn, and then plummeted back into despair, all in about two seconds. *He's probably just calling to tell me what a pervert I am, or warn me he's filing a restraining order.* But I couldn't stop my hand from answering the call. I put the phone to my ear and said hesitantly, "Hello?"

“Where are you?”

My brain wasn't really up to complicated questions, at the moment. “Uh... home?”

“Are you alone?”

Just me and the naked mariachi band. “Yeah.”

“What's your address? I'm coming over.” He said it just like that. No “please.” No question, at all. He was coming over, whether I liked it or not.

It didn't matter. I gave him the address. He could do whatever he wanted—order me around, tell me what to do, swear at me, spank me—just as long as he gave me another chance.

Chapter Six

By the time Joshua rang the front door buzzer, I'd put my jeans back on. I didn't want to scare him off by answering the door in my underwear. I didn't bother with the shirt. A *little* sex-appeal couldn't hurt. When Joshua came upstairs, I was pleased to see he hadn't bothered putting his shirt back on, either. But he still looked angry.

"I've been driving around for a while, thinking," he told me. "Some things still aren't making sense."

"Like what?" I was willing to tell him anything he wanted to know, come clean about every little detail, if it would keep him in my apartment.

"That guy in the café. He thought I was you, didn't he?"

"That was Rob," I said. "My best friend. We were supposed to meet up there for coffee."

"But you never showed."

"I did," I admitted. "But I hid when I saw you, and texted Rob to get him to leave."

Joshua nodded. A rivulet of sweat ran down his collar bone and trickled down his sternum, until he absently wiped it away with his right hand. It took all my willpower to avoid licking my lips. I forced my eyes back up to his face.

"I'm still having a hard time believing you stumbled across someone who looks exactly like you on gay.com, just by pure chance."

"Well... there was chance involved," I said. "But the profile wasn't it." I took a deep breath and plunged into the explanation—how I saw him in Popover's and thought he was incredibly hot, how I searched for his picture online, how I found his profile.

Joshua raised his eyebrows. "In other words, you're a stalker."

"Rob keeps calling me that."

"I'd call you that, too."

This was beginning to fall apart again. I was terrified he'd take off, and I had no idea what I could say to prevent it. "Okay, fine. I'm a stalker. I just wanted to meet you."

“And fuck me.”

“If possible.” I was trying to be truthful, wasn't I?

Joshua shook his head, but when he moved away, it was to take a few steps farther into the apartment, rather than bolt for the door. He looked around at my sparsely furnished living room. Everything was high-tech, and frankly expensive—black leather couch, glass coffee table, the largest widescreen television I'd been able to find. But knowing him, I doubted he was impressed.

He turned back to me and asked, “Are we related? Cousins, or something like that?”

“I have no idea. Who are your parents?”

He told me some names from his family tree, and I told him some from mine. None of them appeared to overlap. After a few minutes of that, Joshua shrugged it off. “I suppose it's possible for two different families with people who look similar to produce a couple kids that happen to look like twins.”

“I guess.”

“How close are we?” he asked, taking a step closer to me. “I mean, really?”

His eyes looked directly into mine, and for the first time, I sensed something there, some of the heat I'd felt whenever I was in his presence—at the pier, now, even when we'd been separated by a plate glass window at the coffee shop. Again, without asking, he reached out and touched my face.

I didn't stop him. I'd been longing for it for so long, all I could do was sigh and lean my cheek against his palm.

“Do you have a full-length mirror?” Joshua asked.

I did, on the double door to my bedroom closet. We stood in front of the mirror, close to it, so we could see our faces in detail. I followed Joshua's lead, mimicking his movements as he tilted his head this way and that, examining our chin's, our eye's, our nostril's, our ears... he even compared our hairlines. It was all identical. There were moments when we moved so in sync with each other I felt as if one of us was a reflection. I just couldn't tell who.

Then we stepped back slightly to take in our torsos. Again, there didn't appear to be any differences. Neither of us had any scars or tattoos. Our musculature seemed identical, which frankly should have pissed me off. I went to the gym at least a couple times a week; I knew Joshua never did. All that time and energy spent on the treadmills and ellipticals to look exactly like somebody who never worked out?

The moment Joshua reached up to slide his fingers along my pecs and circle one of my nipples, I forgot all about that. He was touching me! And he didn't object when I mimicked the gesture, rubbing his nipple until it hardened under my fingertips. I couldn't stop myself from licking my lips this time, but he was doing the same, so I didn't feel self-conscious about it. His skin was *hot*, burning against my fingers and slick with perspiration. When I drew my fingers back to lick his salty sweat from their tips, Joshua smiled evilly and leaned forward to taste my sweat with his tongue... licking it off the flesh of my nipple. I moaned and felt my knees go weak under me.

But Joshua wasn't in the mood for sex. At least, not yet. He pulled away again, and I could see another way in which we were identical—at the moment, we both had nipples that looked hard enough to cut glass. Joshua lowered his hands to his fly, and said, “Are we checking everything?”

Fuck, yes!

“We may not be identical down there,” I said, my mouth dry. “I'm hard as a fucking rock.”

Joshua quirked one corner of his mouth up. “Then so far we're still alike.”

I think my brain exploded. I couldn't think about anything coherent for a moment. Just the fact that Joshua had a hard-on. My eyes dropped to his crotch, where I could see the outline of his hard shaft in the fabric of his blue jeans. As if in slow motion, he began to lower his fly...

He stopped.

I glanced up at his face in a panic, wondering if I'd done something to bring things to a halt. His eyes were glued to my crotch, and I realized he was waiting for me to copy him. I lowered my hands to my fly and slowly began to unzip. Joshua's hand traveled lower again, gradually unveiling the white underwear underneath, and I was breathing so heavily I was growing dizzy.

Without a word, we popped the buttons on our jeans to open them wide and let them fall to our knees. We were both wearing the same, boring white underwear, though there was nothing boring about the way Joshua's briefs tented under the strain of his thick cock, or the damp spot of precome at its tip. I desperately wanted to drop to my knees and lick that spot, and then slide my tongue along the arched length of him through the fabric. But I'd been playing my games with him for weeks. This game was his to control.

Joshua drew a quavering breath, as he lowered his hands into the waistband of his briefs and slipped them down. His cock sprang up to bounce obscenely, a

trail of clear precome arcing between cock and underwear, until it snapped and hung in a glistening droplet from the tip. My cock did the same, when I freed it. Well, I couldn't be sure about the exact trajectory of my precome, but there was definitely a lot of it.

Joshua took me in his hand, rubbing some of that precome along my shaft, causing me to gasp and moan. But I really hoped he wasn't going to end the night with a couple quick and dirty hand jobs, and then book it out of my apartment. Fortunately, that didn't appear to be his plan. He stopped rubbing and used my dick as a handle to pull me closer. "Put it next to mine," he commanded.

We stood side-by-side, pressing our crotches together and looking into the mirror as we compared length and girth. I don't think I'd ever looked at a penis—mine or anyone else's—this closely in my life. Well, I'd been *close* to them, of course. But I was usually preoccupied with sucking them or stroking them or both. This was the first time I'd really looked. And yes, our dicks were twins too. From every angle. I couldn't see any differences.

I was fascinated. But by this point, I was so worked up I just wanted to get this over with, so we could fuck. Of course, I wasn't sure Joshua wanted to fuck. Or suck. Or anything else, but what we were already doing. I was afraid to say anything, in case opening my mouth would lead to me jacking off furiously, alone in my bed. Sobbing.

Joshua bent over, and for a moment I thought he was going to pull up his pants and declare this little adventure over. Instead, he kicked his sneakers off and removed his socks. Were we going to compare feet? That didn't sound very sexy. But Joshua then proceeded to step out of his pants and underwear, which definitely *was* sexy. I didn't have shoes or socks on, but I stripped the remainder of my clothing off, until we were both standing in front of each other, stark naked.

Again, I had the odd sensation that I was looking into a mirror—or perhaps Joshua was looking into a mirror, and I was his reflection. Then Joshua stepped forward out of the looking glass and embraced me. His hot skin pressed up against the length of my body, sweat mingling with sweat, painfully swollen cocks mashing together, trying to merge... In that moment we became two people again. Two people desperate to merge back into one.

"You were right," Joshua panted into my ear. "This is fucking *hot*."

"I'd like to move this to the bed now," I breathed.

“Yes! Please!”

Once we were on the mattress, any reservations Joshua might have had seemed to melt away. He crawled on top of me, sliding his naked body along mine, hard nipples sending a thrill of electricity through my torso as they drew parallel lines up my chest, until we were once again eye to eye. Joshua kissed me then, for the first time. I barely had a moment to breathe, before his warm, soft lips captured mine. I moaned, opening my mouth to his probing tongue. I wanted him inside me—inside my mouth, inside my ass, inside *myself*.

Joshua broke the kiss and gazed into my eyes, a shy smile stealing across his lips. “Is it incredibly egotistical of me to say I think you’re gorgeous?”

I laughed. “Who gives a fuck? We think what we think. I think you’re gorgeous too.”

“Thanks,” Joshua said with a sharp nod. Then he added, “Right now, I’m thinking I want to suck your dick.”

“Don’t you mean you want to suck *your* dick?”

Joshua shrugged. “I’m not even sure, anymore. Just stick one of our dicks in my mouth, please.”

“Sounds good. I’ll take the other one.”

We slipped easily into a sixty-nine position, and when Joshua’s hard cock slid into my mouth, it felt like the most natural thing in the world. He took me into his mouth just as smoothly, linking us together in an infinite loop of taking and giving. He was good—really good. His mouth moved on me with an alternating tenderness and passion that quickly had me squirming for release. I wanted to pour myself into him and swallow every drop he gave me in return.

Fortunately, Joshua had more restraint than I did. He gently pushed me away, just as I was approaching the point of no return, and gasped, “Not yet. I want you inside me.”

“I was already inside you.”

In response, he twisted around until our faces were lined up again and kissed me. “Lube,” he demanded.

I retrieved a bottle from my nightstand. In the intensely aroused state I was in, I might have been dumb enough to forgo using a condom, at least when he fucked *me*—the desire to take him completely inside myself was nearly overwhelming—but Joshua had enough of his brain functioning to veto that. He insisted I grab two condoms and had me put mine on first.

Entering him was amazing, not only because the feel of my cock sheathed in his tight warmth made my eyes roll back in my head, but also because of the way his entire body writhed underneath me and the way he sucked in his breath as I slowly penetrated his opening, and then slid my entire length into him. I was afraid for a second I might be hurting him, but when my eyes focused, I saw nothing but pleasure on his handsome face.

“Good?” I whispered.

“Fantastic.”

I fucked him long and slow, resting my upper body in the cradle formed by his upraised legs, looking down into his sky blue eyes, half-closed in lustful abandon. Joshua panted and clutched reflexively at the bed sheets beside him with both hands. He was rock hard and leaking copiously, but he didn't seem interested in touching himself. As I felt my orgasm rising within me, I reached down to stroke him, but he put a hand on mine to stop me.

“Do you want me to fuck you, too?” he asked.

“God, yes!”

“Then don't make me come yet.”

“Do you want me to hold off?”

“Will you lose interest, if you come now?” Joshua asked.

“Not at all.”

“Then go for it.”

That was all I needed. I thrust a few more times, and then buried myself in as deeply as I could, erupting and filling him with the most massive release I'd ever had in my life. Yes, I still had the condom on, but it didn't matter. I felt as if I was pouring myself into Joshua's entire body, not so much staking a claim as offering myself to him, hoping he'd accept. At that moment, Joshua did something a little odd—something I'd never seen a man do before. He grunted and arched his back, clearly in the throes of an orgasm. And he came. Not copiously, but his neglected cock trickled a small amount of semen—not just clear precome—onto his belly.

Fascinated, I reached down to touch the tip of his dick with my finger, but he grabbed my hand again. “No, don't touch it, or I'll spew everywhere. I don't want to, yet.”

“Do you normally have multiple orgasms?” I asked, enthralled and not a little jealous.

He laughed and blushed adorably. “Um... sometimes. When I’m really into it.”

“Beautiful.” I reluctantly pulled out, so I could lean down and kiss him.

Joshua had to clean himself up a bit before putting his condom on, but it wasn’t long before we were able to switch positions. He entered me with agonizing slowness, showing more concern for my comfort than any lover had ever shown before, and when he at last gave that final thrust and allowed me to draw his length into my body, I thought I’d never felt so complete. Something must have registered on my face, because he asked, “Are you okay?”

“You have no idea,” I answered happily.

He thrust into me unhurriedly, taking his time. We had forever. I felt warm and sated, my only desire at that moment to make Joshua happy. He could go as slow or as fast as he wanted, pound into me or barely move. We could watch the sunrise together, still joined as one.

It wasn’t long, though, before his mounting need drove him to move faster. Still, he seemed to be holding back, until finally I grabbed his shoulders and hissed, “Do it! Come on! As hard as you want!”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he gasped, sweat beading on his brow.

“You won’t! I promise.” Joshua still looked uncertain, so I added, “What I want, more than anything right now, is for you to go nuts. Give me everything you’ve got! Give me the best orgasm you’ve ever had in your life!”

He laughed, but I saw his eyes narrow as he allowed his lust to come to the surface. “Then here it is, Colin. All for you!”

He slammed into me then, sending delicious shockwaves from my ass to my fingers and toes. *Yes!* I watched the desire in his face transform into pure wanton need—his mouth gasping, his brow furrowed—as his eyes burned into mine, and his cock rammed into me over and over again. Then he grunted, “Now!”

Every muscle and tendon in his body tensed, and I could feel him coming again and again and again, deep inside me.

All for me.

Chapter Seven

I was afraid Joshua would skip out on me, after the sex. Maybe that was all he'd come for—take advantage of the jerk who'd tricked him, get off, then call me a creep and tell me to fuck off. But if he was still angry at me, he didn't act it. He was extremely cuddly after we'd cleaned up. With his head resting on my shoulder and one leg thrown across my crotch, he asked, "So what now? Is that all you wanted?"

"All?" I asked.

"This whole charade has been so you could fuck someone who looks like your identical twin," he said, sounding depressingly practical about the situation. "I'll understand if you've had your fill now."

I was shocked. Here I was, afraid he'd ditch me. I hadn't realized he was thinking the same thing. "Maybe I deserved that. Rob says I'm vain and self-centered, and this whole thing probably hasn't proven him wrong. But I really do like you. *More* than like you. And if you think I want to let you go, after the greatest sex I've ever had, you've got to be out of your mind!"

"The greatest sex you've ever had?" Joshua asked, chuckling. "Did Rob mention anything about you being prone to hyperbole?"

Ouch. "Um... well, no..."

"Was it really the greatest sex you've ever had?"

I was about to get slammed. Maybe for him it had just been mediocre. But I couldn't bring myself to lie, at this point, so I took a deep breath and said, "Yes, it was." There wasn't a doubt in my mind about that.

"Thank God," Joshua said, cuddling closer, "because it was for me too."

I introduced Joshua to Rob properly a couple days later. The reason it didn't happen the next day was because we spent that entire day fucking. At some point, we ordered a pizza. I put on jeans to meet the delivery guy at the door—no, there wasn't a kinky three-way—but didn't wear a shred of clothing for the rest of the day. By the next morning, we were both very sated and, admittedly, a little sore.

Rob met us at Popover's for coffee. I swear his jaw hit the floor, when Joshua and I walked in together. No doubt *he* was thinking about a kinky three-

way, the perv. After his initial reaction, he tried to act as if he hadn't even noticed the similarity in my and Joshua's appearances. But he finally glanced around to make sure nobody could overhear, and then leaned in to ask Joshua in a low voice, "So... did you have the same reaction Colin did? When he saw you?"

Joshua glanced around too, looking a bit uncomfortable. "Not right away. I went from being shocked to pissed off pretty quickly. Turned on came later."

Rob looked delighted, but Joshua and I had already discussed how open we would be with our relationship, and this was pushing it. New Hampshire wasn't a bad place to be gay, especially near the seacoast, which was dominated by the university. We'd both walked around town with past boyfriends, held hands, stolen an occasional kiss. But this was different. Even though we weren't self-conscious about being gay, we *were* a little self-conscious about the way we looked together. We weren't brothers... but everyone would think we were. And that was going to complicate our lives.

"Rob," I said, "you're my best friend. And I love you. But back off."

Rob looked shocked. "What did I do?"

"The same thing you and I always do—pry into the gory details of each other's sexual escapades."

"You admit you do it too."

"Absolutely," I said. "We're both perverts. But Joshua has better breeding." Joshua snorted at that, but I ignored him. "If you're hoping to find out what we do in bed together, or get us to email you a video clip, forget it. Off-limits. You got it?"

Rob held up his hands in surrender. "All right, fine."

Joshua smiled and glanced at me out of the corner of his eye. "I'm not a delicate buttercup who needs protecting. I think I'm capable of telling Rob to fuck off, if he asks inappropriate questions."

I shrugged, and Rob settled back into his seat with a lecherous grin on his face. "So... if I were to ask if you guys look alike *everywhere*..."

"I'd tell you to fuck off," Joshua responded coolly.

Rob laughed and raised his eyebrows at me. "Yeah, that seems to work." He took a sip of his coffee and asked Joshua, "You're sure you really want to stick with this guy? Even after learning what a loser he is? What a *stalker* he is?"

“Yes,” Joshua said without hesitating, and I felt a warmth spreading through my body at the affirmation.

Someday, maybe I would learn to bask in moments like that without spoiling them with wiseass comments. But that day hadn't come yet. I said, “I'll warn you, I stopped feeling guilty about my deception around about the fourth time we...” I noticed Rob's ears perking up, so I petered out, suddenly wishing I'd kept my mouth shut.

Joshua merely smirked and told me, “That's okay. I'm over it. And by that fourth time, I was glad you'd done it.” He glanced around quickly. “Rob! Keep a lookout!”

Then Joshua placed a hand on each side of my face and pulled me in for a long, hard kiss.

The End

Author Bio

Jamie Fessenden published his first novella in 2010, and has since published several novellas and novels through Dreamspinner Press. He and his husband have legally married in their home state of New Hampshire and purchased a house together in the country, where they live with their black lab pup, Kumar. Jamie recently left his “day job” as a tech support analyst to write full-time.

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