

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# THE DOOR AT THE END OF SUMMER

Jaime Samms

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# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## THE DOOR AT THE END OF SUMMER

**By Jaime Samms**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

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 they 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 Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

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

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

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## Photo Description

The picture is of two twenty-something men lying on a beach. They are fully clothed in jeans and T-shirts, wrapped up in one another's bodies, but not looking at each other. One gazes off into the distance, and the other at the camera, as though they are both looking for something they can't quite find. They seem happy, but a perceptive observer might detect some tension; a sign that maybe there's something missing in their outwardly idyllic life together.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*These two took me under their wing when I didn't have anywhere else to go. They welcomed me into their family with open arms... but what I feel for them, well, let's just say I don't think of them as my substitute parents. They are my best friends, and I want them both so bad it hurts to be around them. I know I'm young, but I'm nineteen, not a kid. I know they saw how I looked at them the other day when I accidentally walked in on them, and ever since then, they've been looking back... What do I do?*

*HEA or at least HFN please! I am hoping for a hot, hot threesome where hearts are engaged, everyone ends up happy, and no cheating. Also, vanilla sex is fine, but I wouldn't mind a little bit of D/s and some spanking if it works! Hope this inspires someone!*

*Sincerely,*

*Penny*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** BDSM, D/s, fetish toys, open relationship, M/M/M, established couples, summer romance, underage drinking

**Content warnings:** reference to past cutting/self-harm

**Word count:** 22,819

# THE DOOR AT THE END OF SUMMER

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## CHAPTER ONE

Alistair adjusted the handle of the basket he was carrying onto one arm so he could ring the bell with his free hand. He had no idea how his mother, all five foot three of her, managed this job. The thing was about the size of a Volkswagen Beetle and seemed to weigh almost as much, full as it was of the small things people forgot in the midst of an inter-state move. Like toothpaste and a can of coffee, and maps of their new hometown.

A long, clanging buzz sounded deep inside the house and he stepped back. The sound just went on and on. He heard running feet, a thump, muffled shouts and laughter, and then the door flew open.

“Hello?” The exuberant greeting set him back another step and he nearly overbalanced under the weight of the heavy basket.

Hands reached for him, grabbed both his arm and the handle of the basket and lifted the latter away. “Careful!” Happy laughter followed.

Despite his poor balance and the heat flooding his face, Alastair found himself smiling back. “Hi.” He relinquished his hold on the basket and found his feet as he reseated his glasses. When his vision had focused, he was looking into a pair of warm laughing brown eyes. “I’m Alistair.” He stuck his hand out, realized his host had his own now full of gift basket, and pulled back, wiping his palm on his jeans. “Um, welcome to the neighbourhood?” He gave a short nod and took a step down off the porch. “Sorry about the bell.”

“Nah.”

Abruptly, the buzzing stopped and a moment later, another young man appeared in the doorway behind the first, a short wire held up in triumph. “Killed it! Who’s here?” He pushed past and looked Alistair over. “Hi. I’m Malcolm. This is Charles.” He tilted his head to one side. “Who are you?”



“Mal!” Charles shoved the basket at him and pushed him back inside. “This is Alistair. He came to welcome us to the street.” He shot Alistair another of his winning smiles. “We were just about to break for beer and pizza. Come on in.”

“Ah, no.” Alistair held up both hands and waved them back and forth. “I don’t want to intrude. Just deliver the basket and—”

“Come on.” Charles took his arm again, lightly gripping above the elbow, and pulled him forward. “We’ve got plenty. You’re legal, right?”

Alistair nodded so vigorously, his glasses slipped again. “Well, nineteen, yeah.”

“Close enough for a beer. C’mon. We don’t know anyone here,” Charles said. “We moved from out west. A shockingly not-gay-friendly town of backwater yahoos.”

Alistair tried to stifle his reaction, but both men stopped to look at him, faces visibly tightening, pinching around lips and eyes.

He smiled a tiny smile and licked his lips. “This is a good town for that. You’ll be happier here.” He pulled in a breath and plunged on. “I know I’m happier since we came from down south. I was twelve then, just after Dad died. Mom got transferred. I think because she was so sick of seeing me get beat up. You know, the whole gay kid with no father thing. She took the offer without hesitating. We got a new start. People here are so much better.” He flashed a grin through the blazing heat emanating from his cheeks. “Sorry. Life story...” He shrugged and rocked on his heels. “I’m rambling.”

“Yes, you are,” Charles said, holding open the door. “Come in.” His smile was kind. Encouraging.

Alistair was led through an entrance littered with empty, flattened boxes, down a corridor made narrower by stacks of unopened cardboard crates and into a kitchen with more boxes, wrappings and paper hanging out the open flaps.

“Still in full swing, I guess,” he observed.

“Slow going.” Malcolm set the giant basket on the tiny dining table.

“I don’t know if there’s room in this house for all this stuff,” Alistair said, running finger over a box marked *kitchen pantry*.

Charles chuckled and handed over a beer. “It’s really not as much as it looks. I’m a bit of a packing, um, stickler.”

Malcolm snorted.

“I can relate,” Alistair said. “Christmas is a fiasco around our place. My mom had this really delicate set of glass ornaments when she was a kid and every year she tells the story about how her little brother destroyed them all. He waddled down the hallway carrying the box they were tucked in, dropped it because he was carrying too much so he decided to kick it the rest of the way into the living room. By the time she rescued the box from him, every ball was shattered. She cried for a week.

“Now it’s like digging for treasure unpacking the Christmas ornaments, and most of them are these little paper stars made from hers and my hand prints that we cut out of construction paper and glued together when I was five. You can’t break those...”

Both men were staring at him.

“I did it again.” Heat snuck into his face once more.

They grinned.

“I... sort of ramble when I’m nervous.”

“And you’re positively adorable while you do it, too,” Charles said.

As if he wasn’t blushing hard enough already. He had an urge to press the cool bottle against his hot cheek, but took a sip instead. “I don’t think I could actually eat right now,” he confessed. His nerves jangled at him. Talking to people he didn’t know had never really been his thing. When he did, his tongue ran away without his brain and people inevitably backed off until he was alone again. He was better alone. No one to annoy that way. At least he liked his own company well enough.

His mother had talked him into doing this job by convincing him he could drop off the basket and leave, barely have to talk to the people. So not the case, it turned out. Not with these guys, anyway. He wondered, suddenly, if she had known they were gay. She liked to interfere that way, worried he spent too much time on his own.

“Nonsense. You’ll have a slice of pizza with that beer,” Malcolm declared, slipping one onto a plate he’d pulled from the dish drainer and handing it to him.

Alistair stared at him as he took the offered food. The man couldn’t be more than three or four years older than him but he carried himself like a guy who was used to speaking and being obeyed. Sort of like what he remembered of his father, but definitely not in the same fatherly sort of way. Malcolm’s command of the situation was absolute, but still soft in a way Alistair’s father had never, ever been. Probably why he’d had a heart attack so young.

Sitting in that kitchen with the two men, answering their questions about the small town they’d moved to, he got the impression this was very much Malcolm’s domain. It was a comfortable sort of idea, and his nerves settled quickly. He found he’d polished off the beer and two slices and was well into a glass of iced tea when he realized he’d whiled away most of their Sunday afternoon. He glanced about the kitchen and his blush came back.

“I’ve talked your ears off.”

“Don’t worry,” Charles said. “We appreciate the information, and you’ve been perfectly charming company.” He reached over and set his forefinger against the bridge of Alistair’s glasses. Gently, he pushed them up his nose from where they had slipped. He’d been looking over the rims without realizing, and as he gazed at Charles through the lenses, he was struck again by how handsome the sandy-haired man was. His face was open and excited about everything around him, and he smiled a lot. A dimple dug into his left cheek and he had the build of someone who took good care of his body.

He hit all of Alistair’s buttons physically, even if he was a bit less domineering than he usually went for.

Alistair was still contemplating the breadth of Charles's shoulders when Malcolm cleared his throat. Heat flushed right up to Alistair's hairline.

"I'm sorry!" He scrambled off his stool and set his glass down with a clatter. He'd been caught and they all knew it. "I-I should go."

"You should come back tomorrow," Charles said, getting up too, and walking with him to the door. "I've got a ton more questions, like where I can get gardening stuff, and there's lots to unpack." He grinned wide. "You can make up for wasting our afternoon by helping unwrap coffee mugs and candle holders."

"I—"

"Probably have a job." Malcolm gave Charles a sidelong look. "Give the poor guy some breathing room, Charlie."

"Just sayin'." He patted Alistair's shoulder. "He's cute."

Alistair gulped. "I thought... I mean, aren't you two... together?"

This time, Malcolm smiled, and if he was a bit darker, a bit less... expansive than Charles, he was no less handsome. He was a lot more poised and controlled. "We are." His eyes twinkled, chips of obsidian in the backlight from the evening sun coming in the window. "Charlie likes eye candy and pretty things."

"P-pretty?" Alistair had been told that before, with his black curls and ever-changing hazel eyes. When he'd been a kid, he'd been compared to dolls and exotic women, usually not in complimentary ways. Now he stared at these two men, openly appreciating him, right in front of each other, and when he blushed, it wasn't so much because he was embarrassed.

"Thanks." He glanced between them. "I think."

"Oh, it was definitely a compliment," Malcolm assured him. "Come by again sometime."

"I'd like that."

They both smiled and the room lit up. "Excellent," Charles crowed.

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Alistair did return, late the next morning, to find them sleep-tousled and groggy where they sat at their kitchen table looking deflated.

“Morning,” Alistair chirped as Malcolm stomped back to the table and sat. “Mom sent these.” He placed a pie plate of home-baked pastries on the table. “She made me bring them over with her apologies for not greeting you herself. She figured I talked you to death when I wasn’t home until suppertime.” He grinned as they stared, forcing the cheer to cover his nerves. “Guess she knows me.”

They both stared at him, unspeaking and he desperately tried to think what his mother would do next. She always knew how to set people at ease. She’d make the place as cheery as she was. Open it up, shed some light. He went to the windows and opened the shutters between the kitchen and the front entryway, letting in a flood of glorious sunshine.

That got him dark glares from the squinting men at the table.

“You need coffee, then you’ll feel better,” he assured them, moving to the coffee maker sitting on the counter where having something to do would hopefully keep him from turning tail and running.

“Sure,” Charles grumbled. “Coffee’d be great. If *someone*”—he glared at Malcolm—“had labeled the pantry boxes with their contents, and not just ‘pantry’.” He made air quotes and stuck out his tongue at his lover.

“If I remember, we were in a hurry to get the stuff in boxes for the movers, because *someone* insisted on over packing, and then keeping me up all night.” Malcolm smiled at Alistair, and that wicked glint appeared in his eyes, the same as the one he’d noticed as he’d left the night before. “Something about saying good-bye to the old place. It had some... unique features Charlie really liked being tied to.”

Alistair nearly dropped the coffee carafe into the sink. He caught it with both hands and shot a glance at Charles, who was grinning like a maniac and looked a lot less tired, suddenly.

“God, that was a nice place,” he muttered as his smile widened.

Alistair found himself staring, watching the dimple form on Charles’ cheek and the light creep into his eyes. He turned to the sink, hiding his raging blush from them and trying to ignore that blood had rushed to more parts of him than his face.

“Well now, that got his attention,” Malcolm said. “Even if the whole ‘we-don’t-know-where-the-coffee-is’ portion of the conversation didn’t.”

“There’s coffee in the basket,” Alistair said, wishing his voice had more shape to it. He was having a hard time focusing on much of anything but the image in his mind of Charles, tied to something—anything, really—that kept taking over his thought process

“So you’re going to make us coffee?” Malcolm asked. He got up and leaned on the counter, arms folded in front of himself, close to Alistair. He could look down on Alistair from his greater height, and he definitely had presence.

Alistair nodded.

“Good. Charlie, give him a hand.” He left the room, headed down the hall to the bedroom.

Alistair set the full carafe down very carefully, almost managing to hide the tremble in his hands. “I’m sorry.”

“For what?” Charles asked cheerfully, rummaging through the basket for the tin of coffee.

“I don’t know. Pissing him off?”

“Oh, he’s not pissed off.” Charles handed over the tin with a wide, dimpled grin. “He is fucking horny as hell, though, even after I did my best to wear him out last night.”

Alistair’s eye widened and he met Charles’ gaze. “What?”

“You obviously have no idea what a blush does to your face. He could, pretty literally, eat you alive right now. He had a boner the size of—”

“Oh my God, Charles, I didn’t mean—”

Charles laughed. “Calm down, Al.”

“Alistair.”

Charlie’s grin widened. “Al, you can call me Charlie. Only people I don’t like have to call me Charles.” He held onto the tin when Alistair tried to take it. “And no one is mad, I promise.”

“I don’t know what I did.”

“Pretty much, you walked in the front door, Al.”

“What do I do now?”

Charlie shrugged. “Make coffee. Stay and help us unpack.” His grin softened to a legitimately affectionate smile. “Stop panicking. No one is going to do anything someone else doesn’t want them to do. Understand?”

“I... don’t know.”

“Then let me spell it out. If Mal wants to maul you, he can, if you want him to, he can’t if you don’t want him to. He would say the same about me. But in the end,” he grinned crookedly, “you have to want it.”

“But you’re—” he waved towards the bedroom. “Together.”

Charlie nodded. “And we stay together because we are perfect for each other.” He sighed and set the coffee on the counter. “I don’t know how much you know about this stuff, Al, but he’s... demanding. He likes order and calm. I can give him that—obedience, service, and everything else that makes his world make sense. But sometimes, he doesn’t want to be the one doing the touching. He wants to see me happy, but he can’t always do the deed. It’s complicated and I’m not telling you all his secrets. Just that he gets stuck sometimes, and when that happens, he hates to make me go without.”

“So...”

“So we came to a decision a while back. To open things up so he can find the right guy for me who will accept him, too. It didn’t go over so well back

home. And we might never find one guy, but sometimes, we find *a* guy. You see?”

Alistair nodded. “Sure.”

A snort came from Charlie and Alistair glanced up at him. “Not many actually do see.”

“I do.” Deliberately keeping his eyes on his task as he began to make the coffee, he explained. “They say being gay is genetic, right? And I always sort of wondered how that works if your parents are both straight, but there’s no doubt people are just born this way.”

“Yeah.”

“My dad. Well, he was a miserable, demanding, contrary son-of-a-bitch for most of my life.”

“Sorry to hear that.”

Alistair shrugged. “He wasn’t as bad with my mom, or with me when I was little. Just as I got older and he knew. I mean, I’m not exactly the epitome of a straight-acting gay guy.”

Charlie snorted again and Alistair managed to grin in agreement of that wordless assessment of his attire and carriage.

“So as I got older and it was obvious, he got worse and worse, meaner, until Mom just made him stop or told him he had to go.”

“So he went?”

Alistair shook his head. “He totally disintegrated.” He drew in a deep breath, pushed the start button and shoved his glasses up his nose. “He was gay, apparently, and had pretended he wasn’t, got married, got a good construction job, made it to foreman, did all the right things, according to his family. Had a kid. And when I turned out gay, too, he didn’t know what to do. He didn’t want to do what his father had done to him, but he didn’t know how to be any other way. Add to that the openly gay guy he’d just hired on one of his sites, a guy who made no apologies, who recognized his truth and wanted him to do something about it, and his world was falling apart. I was about ten



when I heard this conversation between my parents. Old enough to know what he was talking about, too young to know what it really meant.”

Charlie hopped down from where he'd been sitting on the counter and moved to stand behind Alistair, wrapping an arm around his middle and letting him lean on him. Malcolm had come back from the bedroom and was listening, too, leaning in the doorway.

“So she told him, just be who he was. She'd give him a divorce if he wanted, she'd give him full visiting privileges for me, part custody, anything he wanted. She just wanted him to be happy, for once in his life.”

“And?” Charlie asked quietly, when Alistair said nothing for a long time and the only sound was the coffee maker, burbling away. The scent of fresh brew curled around them and the sun warmed the tiles, and Alistair thought maybe it was a perfect moment, somehow.

“And. He said he didn't want to live without her. She was his lifeline, what kept him sane. He loved her. And she loved him, obviously. Enough to give him whatever he needed. He started dating the guy he'd hired. Patrick. He was nice. Honestly, he was really perfect for my dad. Softened all his edges, was strong enough to take his shit and call him on it, was kind to my mom, and good to me. And he fell hard for Dad. Really hard.”

“So what happened?”

“My bastard father had the bad timing to go and have a fatal heart attack at forty-seven and leave us all in a huge mess. Patrick, he tried to stick around, but he couldn't go in to work and be safe on the job, safe for his co-workers, because he was too distracted, and instead of getting fired, he quit and moved out west. Mom took her promotion and we moved here.” He shrugged. “It was almost perfect there for a little while.” He held up his thumb and forefinger. “So close. He almost had it all. He could have been happy.”

Charlie's head came to rest against Alistair's and his warm breath caressed along his neck. It was comforting, the embrace and the closeness, and Alistair relaxed against him.

“So I know it isn't the same, but I get it.”

Malcolm nodded. “Guess you do.” He turned and went back to the bedroom.

“Is he mad?” Alistair asked. He’d looked so dark and brooding. It was hard to tell what he was thinking.

“He still gets a little mad, when he knows he can’t be everything I need. But not at you, and not at me. Just at himself.”

“And you can’t just...”

“Pretend I don’t need what I need?” Charlie straightened and Alistair took the hint and moved a few steps away. “No, Al. I tried. Like your dad, though, it wouldn’t be honest, and everything we have only works if everyone is brutally honest and tough enough to take the truth.”

“And the truth is, you can’t be in a relationship that doesn’t include sex.”

“No. I can live without sex.” He shrugged and grinned. “Probably. And it’s not that what we have doesn’t include sex. Only that it doesn’t include sex I have any control over. I can submit to him, but I can’t always be submissive. It would... I’d resent him after a while. And he knows that about me. It doesn’t mean I love him any less, and it doesn’t mean what he does give me isn’t appreciated. It is. I like his dominance. Honestly, it’s good for me, and it keeps him safe.”

“And when you need to be in control?”

Charlie smiled and glanced at Alistair through his lashes. “We work something out.”

“Right.”

A part of him wanted to take a few quick steps back, out the door, and far, far away. A part of him warmed to the idea and he glanced towards the bedroom. “And you guys have done this... before.”

“Actually, no. We thought about it, talked about it. Never actually managed to find anyone who didn’t run screaming from the idea. Not where we’re from. Most guys think it’s about as much as they can manage to admit

they like to kiss other guys. Letting two of us double-team them? Not going to happen.”

“Hm.” Alistair nodded. “Coffee’s ready.” He grabbed mugs from the drainer and began to warm them under the tap, then fill them with coffee. “What do you take? What does Malcolm take?”

“Cream for me, black for Mal.”

“Figures.” He dribbled some cream into one of the cups and handed it to Charlie. “You know when you can just tell the guy in the room who drinks his coffee black?” He offered a nervous smile and Charlie laughed.

“You want to bring Malcolm his?” Charlie asked.

“I think you should.” Alistair glanced once more to the partially closed bedroom door. “I think you two still have some talking to do.”

“You going to come back?”

Alistair found a pen and pad and scribbled his name and number, which he handed to Charlie.

“Is this a yes?”

Alistair shrugged. “It’s not my decision, it’s Malcolm’s. Looks and sounds like to me, he’s the one who has to come to terms with it. And he’s the one in charge.” He didn’t make it a question, but it was, and Charlie nodded, answering it.

“Still, in charge or not, how it works is that if you don’t...”

“For Pete’s sake, I’m giving you my number. I’m not going in with my eyes closed, here, Charlie. But Malcolm doesn’t seem convinced, so now it’s time for me to leave, and you two to sort it out. I won’t fuck you if he’s not okay with it.”

Charlie blinked at him, pad dangling from his loose grip. “You shouldn’t swear around Mal, okay?” he asked at last.

Alistair sighed. “Fact is, Charlie, this is less about sex than it is about love. At least for you two. I’ve known you less than twenty-four hours. I’ve slept

with guys I've known for less time than that, but I've never been in love. Maybe I only know what it looks like from the outside, but I do know what it looks like, and, well, yeah. I'll screw you, but I won't screw up you and Malcolm." He pointed to the pad. "That's where you can find me, if you decide you want me."

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"Mal?" A few minutes later, Charlie carried the pad of paper and the hot coffee cups to the bedroom and toed open the door. "Mal, you okay?"

Malcolm was sitting on the edge of the bed, palms pressed into the mattress at his sides, bare feet scuffing over the thick shag underfoot.

"Um," he said.

"Alistair makes pretty decent coffee." Charlie held out the cup.

"Sure." Malcolm didn't move, so he set the cups and pad on the bedside table and knelt on the floor in front of Malcolm.

"You know what we always said, Mal," Charlie began.

Malcolm rested a finger lightly over his lips. "You cannot figure this out for me, babe."

Charlie dropped his gaze to Malcolm's lap and nodded. Something he'd been told before, and he had to accept it was true. If only Malcolm would believe him that he was patient enough to give his lover a chance to figure it out.

"You know, I heard him start talking about his dad, and genetics, and I thought..."

Charlie glanced up, not surprised at the shine in Malcolm's eyes. "I know," he whispered. "I know, Mal. My gut churned when he said that. I thought what I could do to shut him up so you wouldn't have to think about all this."

Malcolm shook his head. "It doesn't go away, Charlie. And you know, his story isn't mine, and he had a happy-ever-after for a little while, at least."

“Yeah.” Charlie rose from his heels to his knees and pressed his forehead to Malcolm’s, cupping his face in both hands. “I love you.”

“You don’t think I’m a freak?”

Charlie chuckled. “Hell, yes. But not about this.”

Malcolm moved out of the intimacy to look into Charlie’s eyes.

It never failed to get right under his skin, that obsidian-dark look, the determination to overlay his control over everything around him, so he never had to be vulnerable. It got under Charlie’s skin, into his gut, stirred his cock, and he lowered his gaze.

“Charlie.”

“Anything you want,” Charlie whispered. “Anything you need, Mal. I’m yours.”

Malcolm lifted his face, gazed into him, and for a long time, all he could be was the repository for all of his lover’s fear and uncertainty. Because he could take it in and keep it all safe and if he did, Malcolm could let it go for a little while.

“I rode you pretty hard last night,” Malcolm said, brushing his thumb over Charlie’s lips.

Charlie nodded, closed his eyes, because it was always better to *feel* Mal when he wasn’t being distracted by how gorgeous and out of Charlie’s league he was. Malcolm’s big, warm hand covered Charlie’s closed lids, and for a few minutes, Charlie knelt and breathed, their only connection that hand over his eyes.

He listened to Malcolm’s unsteady breath and wondered. He knew his lover wasn’t in the room with him just then. He was off in his head somewhere, remembering. Of that one thing, he was right: Charlie could never take the memories away. They’d stay with Malcolm forever. But he could absorb the fear and keep him safe now, give him all the control he needed, and make whatever they did together good for him. He could do those things, and it was a gift to know he had that capacity.

He waited patiently.

Some indeterminate amount of time later, Malcolm removed his hand. Charlie kept his eyes closed. Malcolm was more comfortable in the dark, and today, with the sun up and curtains not yet installed, this was the only way Charlie could give that to him.

The bed creaked and clothing rustled, then Malcolm cupped his cheek. “You can open them.”

“You sure?”

Malcolm kissed him gently, a long, thorough kiss that made his chest tight for wanting more of it, deeper and harder. But Mal pulled away, and so Charlie did what was requested and opened his eyes.

It wasn't like Charlie had never seen the scars. Tiny burn marks lined up along Malcolm's side, armpit to hip, and thin, white parallel lines marched in a neat row, peeking above his waistband, near his groin. They showered and bathed together, but Malcolm was adept at keeping them hidden, like everything else, and it had been a long time since Charlie had been allowed a proper look.

“A person who didn't know they were there would probably never notice them,” Malcolm said. His fingers ran absently over the faint bumps of the razor cuts.

Charlie followed the movement, but quickly moved his gaze back up to Malcolm's. “They've faded a lot.”

Malcolm nodded. “Do you think it would be different if he'd put them there? If *anyone* else had put them there?”

Charlie placed a hand on each of Malcolm's knees and shook his head. “Does it matter?”

“I couldn't keep it together.”

“That was then.”

“If I slip even a little bit, Charlie...”

Charlie drew a deep breath and let it out slowly. “You never do.” He gently took Malcolm’s hand from the scars and kissed his fingertips. “Those are ten years old, Mal. You were a kid. A hurting, frightened kid, and this gave you control. Now you have me.” He smiled. “All the control you could ever need or want.”

Malcolm nodded. “You don’t think I’m a freak.”

Charlie snorted. “Of course I do. You’re my freak, and anyway, this is not the freakiest part of who you are. Now, let’s talk about the thing with the toothpaste, because that’s just plain weird.”

Malcolm laughed and shoved him hard enough to knock him onto his ass. “Always the charmer,” he growled, getting off the bed and straddling him.

“You know me,” Charlie agreed, watching with a growing sense of urgency as Malcolm opened his belt and jeans.

“I do know you.” He stood, one foot still on either side of Charlie’s ribs, so he could push the jeans down and get them off, out of the way, before dropping back to his knees. “Always eager to serve.”

“Hell yes.” But all he could do was lie there and watch Malcolm stroke himself to hardness. His lover’s knees clamped his arms close to his sides, and while he might be strong enough to throw him off, he had no desire to.

“Do something for me, Charlie.”

Charlie nodded, heart pounding. “Anything.”

Malcolm got off him, stripped off Charlie’s sleep pants and lifted his feet, pressing his knees against his chest.

“Hold those.”

Charlie gripped the backs of his knees, but when Malcolm freed his belt from his jeans, Charlie moved his arms to circle his knees. He crossed his wrists, gripping his own forearms and Malcolm wrapped the belt around his wrists. It was hardly the most romantic pose ever, or even very comfortable. But it was never about Charlie’s comfort at this point.

He dropped his head onto the floor and waited, spine digging right through the shag rug and grinding against the hardwood. This was going to leave him bruised and rug-burnt.

His cock, trapped against his body between his thighs, throbbed in response to that thought and Malcolm gripped his hips, positioned him, and began to work his way inside.

He used plenty of lube, and he was right. He had ridden Charlie hard the night before, so entrance wasn't more than a brief stretch and burn. It was the fullness that mattered, and the inability to do anything about anything Malcolm would do to him. Fast and hard, or torturously slow, or backing out completely and leaving him like this while he freaked out in the bathroom were all possibilities Charlie had learned to deal with. The last option happened less and less, now they'd been together so long, but it still could, on days like this, so he remained still, waiting, as calm as he could with his heart rattling in his chest and his cock aching and his entire being crushed under the weight.

There was no running. No more talking, either. Just fucking, and Charlie couldn't help grunting and moaning as he took another pounding. If his hands and feet went numb—and they probably did—he didn't notice. All he really saw was Malcolm's face, his dark eyes, locked on his, and all he felt was the warmth and weight and fullness of being what his lover needed in that moment.

It was enough.

Lots of times, the scenes never got as far as actual intercourse, and that was fine. Malcolm loved to torture Charlie and watch him come, or just watch him come, and most of the time, he took enough control leading up to it that he didn't need Charlie completely immobilized like this to take him, just needed his hands tied. But when he did need this ultimate control, those were the times Charlie most felt like they were complete.

He didn't need to have any control. He didn't need true confessions. He didn't need anything other than to be the vessel of Malcolm's contentment.



The rocking, pounding beat of their coupling quickly ground away thought and sensation, narrowed Charlie's world to the belt holding him in that tight ball. The numbness in his limbs disappeared behind the insistent rhythm of Malcolm's use of his body. All Malcolm needed or wanted from him in that moment was to be still, to accept him, and give him peace. What he got in return was the same peace. His body no longer mattered inside Mal's world, not even his erection, which had dwindled away to nothing. Only the way they joined, gazing into each other's eyes, locking the rest of the world, the past, and all the uncertainty out.

"Charlie."

A thin tendril of thought reached him, and he smiled. "Mal?"

"Stay."

Charlie nodded and concentrated on his lover's face, the sweat beading on his temple, and the delicate lines around his mouth, evidence that he'd learned how to smile again. If he could have traced those lines, he would have.

"I want to try," Mal whispered and for a moment, Charlie thought the words were a part of his light-headed haze of submission, but Mal's gaze was so intense, so fierce, he had to believe it had been real. Again, he nodded.

Mal stopped what he was doing long enough to get the belt off, and Charlie grabbed the backs of his knees. Because he wasn't forced into helplessness didn't mean he wasn't still submitting. That was a dynamic that would never change, and he gave Malcolm the same compliance his bondage had.

Mal sat back on his heels and gazed at the offer, taking in every line of Charlie's open, vulnerable position.

Charlie held his breath. If his heart had been pounding before, now it slammed so hard against his ribs he was sure it would smash itself to a bloody pulp.

Malcolm leaned over him, guided himself with one hand and the slow, delicious slide of cock into hole had Charlie gasping and panting out a nearly incoherent jumble of pleas and promises.

“God, Charlie, you are so fucking perfect,” Malcolm whispered.

“Mal, please, just... do me until I can't feel anything. Please.”

Malcolm traced a circle around his dimple as he slowly, almost lazily, slid in and out of him. “I want you to stay with me this time. Come with me.”

Charlie stared up at his lover. How to tell him what worked wasn't what Malcolm always hoped would work?

“You never come when I fuck you, Charlie. Why is that?”

“I come when you watch me, Mal. That's what works.”

Malcolm smiled, his most brilliant, wicked smile. “I'm watching you now, my Charlie.” He snapped his hips, pegging Charlie's prostate, which didn't make him hard, but by God, did it make his body sing, and he cried out.

“And I'm not the only one watching.”

“What?”

Even if he'd still been bound, Charlie could not have gone more still, more frozen in the bright light of Malcolm's glee.

A small squeak from the hallway made him try to twist and crane around, but Malcolm pinched his chin in his grip as he jerked his hips against Charlie's ass again. It was a deliberate, calculated thrust to nudge his prostate again, and he threw his head back, his skull thudding against the floor as he grunted.

He actually recognized a glimpse of Alistair's shoes before Malcolm demanded his attention again.

“Does it help to know that?” he asked, coaxing Charlie's cock to half-mast with a light stroking of his fingers.

Another soft squeak from the hallway did the rest. “I'm sorry!” followed by the clatter of feet on the boards, the slamming of the back door and Charlie groaned, fully hard again.

“You wait here,” Malcolm demanded, getting up and wrapping a towel around his waist. “Be right back.”

He dashed out of the room, and Charlie heard the door again. His palms sweated against his skin and his hips began to complain as the minutes ticked past. Lube drooled down his crack and a breeze from somewhere lifted his skin to tiny bumps of chill before he heard the door open. He couldn't hear Malcolm's bare feet on the floors, but he could sense him. Mal would never expose him to anything they hadn't agreed on. They had all but accepted someone was going to have Alistair, sooner or later, so he took a breath and craned around to see who might be coming into the room.

Just Malcolm.

"You catch him?"

Malcolm nodded, kneeling on the floor and prying Charlie's fingers free of his knees. "Relax."

Charlie would have flopped out flat, but Malcolm supported his legs as he lowered them, and propped his knees over his own thighs. "Okay?"

Charlie nodded through the buzz of returning circulation, and a few shivers.

Malcolm pulled a blanket from the bed for him. "Lift." He slid the towel under his ass to try and save the rug from the lube. "He was on the porch having a mild panic attack."

Charlie grinned. "Is he okay?"

"A little shaky. Um." He chuckled. "Poor guy. You're very hot, with your ass in the air like that. I think all the blood ran out of his head." He tapped his temple.

Charlie snickered, caught Malcolm's amused gaze and they were both laughing.

"I'm sorry," Malcolm said after a moment, holding out a hand. "This is kind of a bust."

Charlie accepted the help to sit up and then swivelled under his blanket to lounge against his lover. "It's okay." He rubbed a palm along Charlie's thigh. "You feel better?"

“Much.” He turned Charlie’s head and kissed him, the long, hard kiss Charlie had hoped for earlier. “Thank you.”

“Mmmm.” Charlie lay back, head against his chest, eyes closed, and cock regaining some life. “Always my pleasure, Mal.”

“I know.” Malcolm stroked his hair and played fingers over his chest as Charlie stroked himself. With the feel of Malcolm still lingering inside him, the image of Alistair watching them, everything the morning had brought, his mind reeled a bit and his body held tension he knew one sure-fire way of releasing.

Pushing the blanket back, he bared his erection and his hand working it and sank his weight into Malcolm’s arms. It didn’t take long to get right to the edge, with Malcolm playing over his nipples and nibbling at his neck.

His lover whispered encouragement into his ear and in a few minutes, he was riding the edge hard, needing to spill over.

“You ready?” Mal whispered.

“God, yes,” Charlie managed to force out. “Please.” Because he wouldn’t come without Mal’s say so. It wasn’t a formal rule, like some of the others. It was just how he liked it, and Mal seemed to agree that’s how it should be.

“You know if Alistair hadn’t quite connected the submissive hints you gave him earlier, he does now.” Mal traced a heart over Charlie’s chest. Dragging his fingernail lightly over each nipple as he passed.

“Uh,” Charlie replied, pulling his legs just a trifle further apart. “You think?” he squeezed his dick and held his breath.

He could hear a grin in Malcolm’s voice when he spoke. “You’re shaking.”

Charlie sighed, tightening his fingers, feeling the throb and heat under them and the tightness begin to form deep inside. His heart thundered. If he moved his hand, he’d come, but he couldn’t catch his breath. Holding off had never been so hard. It was the idea of Alistair walking back in, seeing him like this, having already seen him with his feet in the air and Mal buried in him...

“Mal.” His voice was small, desperate.

“You need help?” Malcolm asked.

“You could do it.”

“Or.” Malcolm glanced past him, towards the doorway. “Come here.”

“Oh God!” Charlie turned to the door, only to find it empty. “Really?” He groaned and his balls tightened.

“But you like that idea,” Malcolm crowed. “Look at you.” He touched the tip of Charlie’s cock and brought his finger to Charlie’s lips to suck the wetness away. The taste of his own come on his tongue only made everything worse and Charlie actually whimpered.

“Do me a favour,” Malcolm said, lips close enough to his ear to brush against the shell and lift the hairs along his neck.

“Anything.”

“Imagine he was standing right there in the door, watching.”

“Mal.” Charlie groaned.

“Got it?” Malcolm touched his forehead. “Right there in your mind, do you have it?”

Charlie nodded.

“Imagine him tenting his pants watching you do everything I tell you. Imagine him licking his lips, eager to have you down his throat or up his ass.”

Swears formed on the tip of Charlie’s tongue, flirted with his lips and he clamped his mouth shut, held them back. “Mm-hm.” He nodded again and squeezed his eyes shut.

“Imagine me letting him suck you down and swallow all your jizz.”

“Oh God.”

“Now let go of your dick, Charlie.”

Charlie’s free hand tightened into a fist. No way could he remove the pressure and hold his explosion back. The idea of Alistair kneeling between

his legs, bare ass in the air for Malcolm while he sucked Charlie was too much.

“Let go,” Malcolm ordered, voice a flat, hard heat of command in his ear.

He let go.

His balls drew up and his body jerked tight. His mind whited out behind of sheet of pure pleasure and he came, long jets spurting out of him, his cock throbbing, the warmth of come splattering over his chest.

“You have the most beautiful mind, Charlie,” Malcolm praised. Then he snickered. “A pretty good trajectory, too.” His finger dipped into the hollow at Charlie’s throat and trailed up a few inches and Charlie heard the smack of lips and a sigh.

“Just couldn’t leave you hanging, could I?” Malcolm asked as Charlie’s breath settled into a deeper, steadier rhythm again. His muscles liquefied and Malcolm gathered him close against his chest.

“You can do whatever you want to me, Mal,” Charlie said. “Anything you want.”

Once more, Malcolm took his chin and turned his head so he could kiss him. “I know.” He moved to look into Charlie’s eyes. “I know. And I love you for that. Among many other things.”

Charlie grinned, happy to see the light back in his lover’s eyes. Whatever had gone through Malcolm’s head over the course of the morning, he was more at ease than Charlie could remember seeing him since the decision to move out here. “I love you too.”

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## CHAPTER TWO

Charlie wanted them to shower together. Malcolm could see in his eyes what he wanted so plain. He wondered if Charlie was that easy to read, or if it was just their connection that made it clear to Malcolm, knowing what went on in his lover's head. He conceded to the shower, because as much as he hated anyone seeing what he'd done to himself all those years ago, Charlie had been a huge part of his healing process. He deserved to see the scars had faded.

So they showered and Malcolm lathered him and rinsed him and took as good care of Charlie after the fact as Charlie had taken care of him during the aborted fucking. The dynamic wasn't something they had ever really talked about. It had grown organically from their lovemaking that had never worked out until the first time Charlie looked him in the eye and gave over every aspect of control to Malcolm. He hadn't known he even needed it until Charlie gave it to him. He only knew he had to give something back to his lover after all the taking he did.

Over the years, they stumbled through how it worked, still did stumble, sometimes, but mostly, they'd found ways around Malcolm's issues and Charlie's deep-seated need for chaos control in his own head.

"I am going to find some dishes and hopefully, some food," Charlie announced as they dressed. He sounded centered and happy, and Malcolm nodded.

"Good. Because we still have a young man on our back porch and I'd really like to make sure he's okay."

"You want me to talk to him?"

Malcolm grinned. "I think maybe it needs to be me this time."

"Oh, right. Because he's lost all respect for the easy slut over here." Charlie said it with a grin on his face that assured Malcolm he didn't think of himself that way and that he understood Malcolm didn't think of him that way, either. But still, his lover had a tender spot about it where the rest of the world was concerned. He worried about what others might think of him for how they

were in bed. How they were in life, more and more as they went on, and he would not let Charlie get bruised for the gifts he gave to Malcolm.

Rubbing a hand over Charlie's buff bicep Malcolm returned the smile. "That wasn't the impression I got. But it is why it has to be me, Charlie. I won't let that attitude anywhere near you, I promise you that. No one else has to understand how we are. They just have to respect it. You do what I can't. That doesn't make you easy. It makes you strong."

"I know."

Malcolm wrapped him into a hug and a deep kiss. "*Know* it, Charlie. I have nothing but respect for what you give me."

Charlie held him tight. "I love you, that's all."

"Okay. So. Coffee for the kid, and yeah. Food for three, okay?"

"Course." Charlie went to the kitchen as Malcolm finished dressing and went out to the back porch. He half expected to find it unoccupied, but Alistair still sat where he'd left him, staring out over the expanse of lawn towards the sea beyond.

"This could be a beautiful garden," Alistair said quietly.

"Yeah." Malcolm sat in the chair beside him. "Part of why we bought it. Charlie loves to garden. He's got the biggest green thumb I ever saw. He has a vision. You should hear him talk about it."

Alistair looked over and smiled at Malcolm. "I don't know what to say to him."

For a few minutes, Malcolm studied the younger man. "Nothing," he said at last. "About catching us having sex—"

"It was more than that," Alistair said softly.

"Not really. The emotion is the same. So is the messy end result." He grinned and caught a quick smile from Alistair, too, before the poor guy's nerves flooded back. "Just the method is more suited to our temperaments."

Alistair nodded.



“Tell you what,” Malcolm said, when the silence had stretched and their guest didn’t seem to have much else to say. “Come and eat breakfast”—he glanced at the sky and shrugged—“lunch with us. Just hang out. Get to know who he is, and forget what you saw. What you might think that makes him, okay? He is the best guy I know, and he honestly likes you.”

Again, Alistair nodded.

“Thank you.”

The screen door squeaked a few moments later and Charlie came out with a tray. He’d reheated the coffee Alistair had first supplied and brought another mug, along with cream and sugar. “Found some waffle mix and even guessed which box the iron was in. Breakfast will be ready soon.” He set the tray down and handed Malcolm his mug, then glanced to Alistair. “Wasn’t sure what you take, but I figured you for a cream and sugar kind of guy.”

Alistair nodded. “Yeah. Lots of both.” He dressed his drink and sat back again. “Malcolm said you’re going to build a garden.”

Charlie sat on the railing, leaned against the post and nodded. “Yeah. There’s a good spot on the old gazebo, once it’s fixed up, for an outdoor shower, and space along the west fence for a shed. Too hot there for plants, so I’ll build a little tool house and potting shed. And put some beds in around the gazebo, then take out some evergreens over there”—he pointed—“and replace them with smoke bush and flowering shrubs. Dahlias will grow really well here and—”

Malcolm couldn’t hold back a small chuckle any longer.

“I’m doing it again,” Charlie said, a huge grin on his face.

“Burning waffles?”

“Oh shit!” He jumped up and ran for the kitchen.

“He really likes gardening.”

Malcolm nodded. “And talking about it. Talking in general, really.”

“You don’t strike me as the kind of guy who talks a lot.”

“I’m not.”

Alistair studied him. “I think I’ll hang out for a bit, if that’s okay.”

Letting go of tension and the pent breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding back, Malcolm agreed. “Good.”

For a little while, they were silent. “You should know,” Alistair said after a while. “I’m not staying.”

“Um, you just said...”

“I mean in town. I’m moving to Baltimore in September.”

“Really.” A surprising churn of his gut had Malcolm turning away to look out at the view. “School?”

“Yeah. Graduated a year ago past January. Worked for a year and a half to make enough to pay for it, but with the money my grandmother left me, I have enough now.”

“What are you taking?”

Alistair shrugged. “General arts. No idea what I want to do, really. Barely had time to figure out I’m not a kid anymore.”

“But you’re here for the rest of the summer.”

“Yeah. Another month or so.”

“And Charlie’s making waffles.” He made the offer despite his mixed feelings. The last thing he wanted was for Charlie to get attached to someone who’d leave in a month. But then maybe someone who wasn’t sticking around was ideal for them. Someone they *couldn’t* get attached to.

“Charlie made waffles. I do love waffles.”

“Then I guess you should come and eat with us.”

Which he did, and then he helped them to unpack, and later, offered to show them around town a bit. They ate out, they went dancing, and they repeated the pattern the next day. And the next.

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## CHAPTER THREE

By the time three weeks had passed, any bashfulness Alistair had felt around his new friends had ceased. The long, warm summer days passed quickly as he helped them settle in, spent afternoons on their beach and nights showing them around and exploring the best dancing spots with them. He had never been one for the nightlife, so the dancing and flashing lights were intoxicating, especially when they discovered there was more than one club where the three of them, dancing close in the midst of the crowded dance floor, didn't raise eyebrows.

Alistair never would have considered himself much of a dancer, but between Charlie and Malcolm, his lack of skills didn't seem to matter. In fact dancing skill didn't seem to be the point at all. It was just an excuse to rub bodies close and grind hard-ons in a sweet, sweaty haze of bliss for a few hours.

Alistair felt a little guilty about getting between them, but usually only for about the first five minutes. Both Charlie and Malcolm, with their wandering hands and grinding hips, got him over that quickly, and he soon ran out of reasons to complain after the first few evenings out with them.

By the third week, Alistair felt the imminent end of the summer and the corresponding end to this brave new thing he'd found. He wasn't sure he was willing to call this one more night of dirty dancing if it might be their last.

For the first time, he decided, as they hit the last bar, it was time to let his own hands do a little wandering of their own. It only took a bit of liquid courage guzzled on the sly and a steady, pounding rhythm to get there.

Dancing chest-to-chest with Charlie, music thumping through him, all he had to do was follow Charlie's lead. Sliding his hands up over the tight T-shirt covering the tantalizing curves and planes of Charlie's pecs. Tentative at first, he glanced up over the rims of his glasses, close enough to see Charlie grinning down at him.

He liked how the undulating muscles felt under his palms. He liked the way Charlie was looking at him, encouraging. Participating in the fondling

was a little different than being humped and smelling their heat surround him. He hoped it would be taken for the invitation he meant it to be.

When Charlie bent and took his mouth, he had his answer. The beat continued to hammer through him, to drive his own heart in its pounding thump against ribs, but the rest of him stopped, suspended. His feet fused to the floor. Fingers dug into hard muscle. His world narrowed to the hot, wet tongue sliding along his lips and he gasped.

Taking the invitation, Charlie slipped his tongue inside his mouth and even Alistair's breath stopped for the duration.

Then a heavy hand landed on his shoulder and squeezed. Muscle hard as a brick wall pressed against his back, pushed him forward until his neck strained back under the pressure of Charlie's kiss. Thick fingers wrapped around his wrists and his hands were removed from Charlie, pulled down to his side and then clasped behind him.

For a heartbeat, Charlie broke the kiss to glance over his shoulder. His gaze smoldered a challenge and Alistair felt the familiarity of the crush between Charlie and Mal, the scent of their sweat and their arousal and he let his eyes drift closed.

"You're kissing my boyfriend," Malcolm whispered in his ear, the sound so low and close Alistair had no difficulty hearing it over the music or feeling it vibrate through his whole being.

Charlie ground against him, his thick cock hard against Alistair's, his weight crushing. It was hard to breath. Hard to think.

Behind him, Malcolm swayed to a slower song as the music changed, and he found himself carried along on the wave of sound and the sway of bodies.

"Technically, Mal," Charlie said, also close so Alistair and Mal could both hear. "I kissed him."

"Oh, I know." Malcolm licked the shell of Alistair's ear, nipped at it and nuzzled. "I was watching. Do it again."

Alistair held his breath, squeezed his eyes shut. Charlie's hands on his face tilted his head back, and lips once more covered his. He was helpless to stop them. He didn't want to stop them. Matching Charlie's slow gyrations, he let his ass push back into Malcolm's crotch and shivered at the hard cock he felt there, too.

Malcolm crossed Alistair's wrists behind him, pinning them between their bodies, gripped in one of his big hands. The other, he edged between Charlie and him where he fondled them both by turns.

Alistair could barely breathe and it had little to do with the kiss. This was not dancing. This was him being made a public spectacle, taken on the dance floor where anyone who wanted to could watch. He pushed his aching cock into Malcolm's hand and a groan into Charlie's mouth.

"You going to shoot?" Malcolm asked into his ear.

He was very, very close. If he had known all it would take was to touch one of them, he'd have done it weeks ago.

"I asked you a question." Malcolm squeezed him hard and he whimpered. "You gonna come?"

He was. He knew he was. They knew he was.

"Don't," Malcolm said, a low, growled-out command.

"Can't help it."

"Yeah you can. Mind over matter."

Alistair whimpered again. "Please."

"Let you come? Or let you go?"

If Malcolm told him to come, there in the middle of the bar, he would have. So if he told him not to...

He pulled in a breath and held it. His whole body shook, but he kept his hips still, refrained from pushing into Malcolm's palm again.

Charlie's tongue worked his mouth. His hard body crushed him against Malcolm, and he was completely theirs to control. He focused hard on relaxing

his body, going limp in their grasp and letting them do what they wanted. What he wanted, really, but there was no fooling himself into thinking it would be in any way other than on their terms.

“Very good, boy,” Malcolm whispered, true praise in his tone. “We’re going to take you home, now.”

Charlie backed away a hair, ending the kiss and telling him to open his eyes as he reset Alistair’s glasses, very gently. “You want that?” Charlie asked.

Alistair nodded. His glasses slipped and Charlie put them back a second time.

They stumbled out of that club, the late August moonlight shimmering on wet pavement. Rain had come and gone. The sky was clearing and Alistair glanced around at the diminished crowds and quiet boardwalks. He hadn’t realized how quickly the season had slipped away on him.

In a week, it would be over. In a week, this new, exotic thing in his life would be gone. Well, he would be gone, to college in Baltimore, and that was a very long way from Charlie and Malcolm.

“You’re quiet,” Charlie said as they slipped into a cab for the ride back to their street.

“Thinking.” He wiggled more comfortably into the seat between the two burlier men.

“About?” Malcolm rested a hand on his knee and tipped his head. It was an expression Alistair already knew well. One that meant Malcolm had latched onto something and wasn’t going to let go until he had what he wanted. Usually, an answer Alistair was reluctant to give, or a task Charlie didn’t feel like doing. But neither of them, it seemed, had the will to resist Malcolm for very long.

And Alistair didn’t really bother to try this time. “I’m leaving in five days.”

“We know.” Charlie settled beside him and put a firm arm around his shoulders. He did that a lot. Rather than move away as he normally did,

Alistair gave in to the beer haze and the warmth and rested his head on Charlie's shoulder. "I'm going to miss you guys."

Malcolm squeezed his knee. "We still have five days. You just need something to remember us by."

That made Alistair smile. "Like what? A photo strip from the dollar booth?"

Malcolm reached into the breast pocket of his shirt and pulled out a small, dog-eared square. "Already have that." He held it out and Alistair glance at the image on it. The three of them crammed into the tiny booth had barely fit. The hilarity of the effort showed on all their faces in the photo.

"Yeah. Guess we do." He automatically felt for his wallet, knowing his square was tucked safely away in there.

"So what do you really want?" Malcolm tilted his head again and Alistair gazed over at him.

The beer made him loose. Less careful than he normally was. "Wasn't that obvious? You." They both remained silent, gazing at him.

"Oh shit."

"By 'you'," Charlie said, "do you mean him?" His arm was still around Alistair, but his body was rigid, his voice flat.

"Not exactly." Alistair's heart thundered and he found he was cold and sweating, his cock hard, his heart fluttering panicked wings in its dark cage.

"Then what?" Charlie asked, finally taking his arm away.

"I'm leaving in five days," Alistair said again.

"Yeah, you said. We know." Charlie crossed his thick arms across his chest. "So?"

"So it isn't like I can come between you once I'm in Baltimore. In five days, I'll be gone. The past three weeks we've been dirty-dancing like fiends." He took a huge breath and let the beer rule his tongue. "Who says we always have to do it with our clothes on?"

“Um, the bar managers?” Charlie growled, arms still clenched across his chest, but the barest hint of a smile playing at the corner of his lips.

Alistair punched him. He probably hurt his knuckles more than Charlie’s arm, but so what. It almost got the big man to lose the smile.

“I’m not trying to steal your man, Charlie. You can keep him. He’s a bossy so-and-so.”

“I like him like that,” Charlie said quietly.

“You like him bossing you around?” Oh, how he wanted to make that sound incredulous, but hadn’t he held his orgasm in check just because Malcolm told him to?

Charlie fixed him with a luminous glare. “Yeah. I do. Problem with that?”

Alistair took a moment to really think about it and finally shrugged. “Don’t really know, I guess.” He glanced at Malcolm who was alternately watching them both. “Never really tried it.”

“But you want to,” Malcolm guessed, running his hand along Alistair’s thigh, closer to his crotch. “Don’t you?”

A long cool shiver ran through him, chilling the dance sweat on his skin. “Yeah.”

Malcolm leaned forward and spoke quietly to the cabbie who nodded and on the next block pulled into the convenience store parking lot.

“What are you doing, Mal?” Charlie asked. There was a thickness in his voice Alistair didn’t like.

“Nothing,” Alistair said. “Never mind. Pretend I didn’t say anything. Pretend I never touched. Please, guys.”

“Everybody out,” Malcolm ordered.

Without questioning or batting an eyelash, Charlie opened the door and climbed out of the cab. Malcolm paid and stuck his head back into the back seat. “You can take the cab home, Al. No hard feelings. Or you can get out. Choice is yours.”



If he thought too hard, he'd chicken out. So he slithered along the seat and scrambled out to stand in front of Malcolm.

"Okay, then." Malcolm shut the door and the cab drove off.

"Go inside and get a package of condoms, Charlie," Malcolm ordered, gaze fixed on Alistair.

Silence pervaded for a few heartbeats and Alistair understood. Malcolm was giving Charlie his choice. He could obey, and give tacit consent to whatever came next, or refuse, and close the subject for good.

Alistair held his breath, regretting he'd said anything at all. Stupid to have had that last beer. To have touched what wasn't his. To have spoken. Why had he turned off his brain at this late date?

Finally, Charlie sighed, looked carefully at Alistair, eyes narrowed. "You sure about this, boy?"

Alistair shivered again, but nodded. "Yes." He had to be. He had to do it or always wonder.

"Once we agree, you don't get to change your mind or say no. That's part of Mal's thing. It's his game, then, and even I don't get a say." He jabbed a thumb at his own chest as he spoke. He loosened, finally, and raked fingers through Alistair's sweaty hair. "I'm good with that. I trust him."

"I trust you both." He glanced to Malcolm, but Charlie's fingers tugging brought his attention back quickly.

Everything Charlie thought was written on his face. His uncertainty, nerves, and lust scoured his expression in quick succession. "I *want* you," he rumbled. "But soon as I open that door, I only get what Mal allows."

So he took now. At least, as much as was prudent in the store parking lot, under the streetlamps and moonlight. He took Alistair's face in his hands and kissed every thought out of his head. It boiled through most of the beer haze and washed his confusion away.

"Charlie," Malcolm reached across and took him by the wrist, effectively breaking them apart. "You're sure about this."

“Are you?”

Caught in the middle of the look they shared, there was enough residual heat to boil Alistair’s blood without even a touch from either of them.

“I already made my call.” Malcolm squeezed Charlie’s fingers, glanced at Alistair and back. “You’re my number one, Charlie. Always.”

Charlie smiled, broad and loving. “We are what we are, babe. If I wasn’t good with that, I would never have left home for you, and you know it.”

“Charlie—”

“We’ve hashed this out a thousand times. Part of coming here in the first place was to have the freedom to be who we are. I’m not going back now.” He lifted his captured hand and kissed Malcolm’s knuckles. “Be right back.” He broke free, and it took an effort, but as soon as he regained his freedom, he was out of Malcolm’s reach and up the front steps of the store.

Silence sank down around Alistair and Malcolm. “I should have kept my mouth shut,” Alistair said softly. “I thought, with the way we danced and everything. I just thought...”

“Alistair,” Malcolm pressed fingers under his chin and made him look up. “You thought right. We all know it.” He leaned close. “Do you know what it says about you that you were the one with the balls to admit it out loud?”

“I’m desperate?”

“Brave.” He caressed Alistair’s cheek and smiled. “Beautifully brave.”

Alistair drank in the praise flowing off the older man. “You’re going to take me home with you,” he whispered. He knew how that sounded. Airy and dreamy and dazed.

Malcolm nodded.

“Then what?”

Malcolm smiled and his eyes sparkled. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

Of course he did. He wanted to know it all. Everything they expected of him. And he didn't. He wanted to trust them, go with the flow of the evening. It terrified him a bit. It excited him more.

Slowly, he shook his head.

“No?” Malcolm kissed his lips lightly. “You don't want to know?”

“No.” His voice rose barely above a whisper, but it brought a smile to Malcolm's face.

“Good.”

“Will you tell me about moving here? What you ran away from?”

Malcolm shook his head. “No.”

“Why?”

“Because it's our past. It's the old us. What we pretended to be.” He caressed Alistair again, kissed him again, lingering longer, delving a little bit deeper with his tongue, but keeping the contact too tender to inflame. “You are the new.”

“But I'm leaving—”

“I know. In five days. Not tonight. Or tomorrow.”

“No.”

The bells above the store's door rang and Charlie was back. He handed Malcolm the bag and Mal opened it and peeked inside. He glanced at Alistair and winked. “Pre-lubed.”

Alistair nodded. “That's... good.”

“It's a start.” He pulled out a bottle of lube and grinned. “We got you covered, Al, don't worry.”

“I'm not.” He glanced between them and let the heat and blush scald away the last of his beer buzz. And he really wasn't. Already, he'd talked more about getting into bed with a guy than he ever had in his life. Most times, he

danced, kissed, and enjoyed his romps, but they weren't encounters that required much discussion.

"Here." Malcolm handed him the bag. "Carry your supplies."

Nothing like carrying the whip to your own flogging. Alistair gripped the rolled up bag in tight fingers and walked between them towards home. The stroll to Malcolm and Charlie's doorstep was less than ten minutes, and made mostly in silence, Malcolm in front and Charlie's huge, comforting presence at his side.

"Second thoughts?" Malcolm asked as they headed up the front walk.

"No."

Charlie's hands descended on his shoulders and he shuddered and drew to a stop under the pressure. He waited on the bottom step, Charlie's hands holding him still as Malcolm went up and unlocked the door. He went inside and still, they stood there.

"What are we waiting for?"

"I told you. From here on, it's his game."

"I'm not playing."

Charlie kissed his temple. "Neither is he. Not in the way you're thinking, but we are playing, Al. And it's his scene."

Scene. Alistair swallowed, nodded, and took a step back into the comfort of Charlie's heat. "Okay."

"You're sure?" Charlie kissed his other temple.

"I'm sure. Can we go in?"

"When he says." He wrapped both arms around Alistair and pulled him back against his chest. "Patience."

Alistair nodded and leaned against the warm, broad chest. "Okay." He put himself into Charlie's hands and sighed. "Okay."

Charlie's arms tightened around him, nearly cutting off his air, but it was comforting. Grounding. Gripping Charlie's forearms, he pressed kisses to his skin and closed his eyes.

"You ready?" Charlie asked. His lips tickled and his breath lifted the fine hairs near his ears.

"More than." He pulled Charlie's hand to his crotch and thrust into his palm.

Charlie chuckled.

"Enough of that, boys!" Malcolm called from the porch. "Get in here."

Charlie pulled abruptly away and propelled Alistair forward. "His scene," he hissed. "Keep that in mind."

Not knowing what to expect, released from the safety of Charlie's hold, Alistair stumbled forward and caught himself on the porch banister.

"Okay?" Malcolm asked.

Alistair nodded vigorously.

Charlie steadied him by the elbow. "Easy."

"I'm okay." He sounded breathless. He *was* breathless. But he was also okay. He smiled up at Malcolm and was rewarded by an approving nod and a darkly glittering grin.

They led him inside and the front door closed with a soft thud behind him.

He followed them to the living room where Malcolm was fiddling with the stereo. A warm samba beat throbbed through the air and Charlie's hips began to sway. Fascinated, Alistair watched as Charlie swung and his stocking feet glided over the hardwood. He was graceful despite his size, and more beautiful, when he moved like that, than Alistair could have imagined. Charlie closed his eyes, and ran a hand over his chest, his other arm swaying in the air beside him as he moved to the music.

Malcolm watched, too, his admiration plain, his own hips following the beat in a much more subdued pattern, his feet still. This was Charlie's show,

and it was riveting. After a few minutes of watching him seduce with just his moves, Alistair found he was also swaying to the swing of the music, and when he glanced at Malcolm, he realized Charlie wasn't the only one under scrutiny.

"Join him," Malcolm ordered. Though it was softly said, there was no denying the command. Alistair shuffled forward, nervous, acutely aware his moves had nothing on Charlie's. He was clumsy, thin, and awkward next to Charlie's athletic, easy expression.

Still, Malcolm had made a command, and Alistair's libido remembered the way it had felt dancing between them. If that could happen again, he'd do as he was told.

Charlie pulled him in, turning him so his back melted to form smoothly to the contours of Charlie's chest. Big hands cruised over him, rubbing the cotton of his shirt to sweaty, sensitive skin, tightening his nipples and lifting his cock. He didn't require Charlie's touch on his equipment to get it in full working order. His hard body melded close, his hitched breathing in Alistair's ear was enough.

Apparently satisfied he was being obeyed, Malcolm made himself comfortable on a chair next to the stereo. Moonlight and streetlight drifted in between the curtains and trailed across his white shirt. His hand, splayed over his chest, ticked off the rolling beat as he watched them. He spread his legs and there was no mistaking the pleasure he was getting just from watching.

Behind Alistair, Charlie moved away, leaving him dancing for a few moments on his own. When the bigger man's guiding touch came back, there was more heat, and, Alistair realized, fewer clothes between his back and Charlie's chest. He never strip-teased anyone before, and his heart tripped into a manic flutter.

Before he could think up some way to follow Charlie's lead, though, it was being done for him. Charlie's hands stopped their roving and took on purpose, unbuttoning Alistair's shirt, one button at a time, and baring his chest to Malcolm's view. It wasn't much of a view, he thought, but the heat of skin on

skin when Charlie pulled it down over his shoulders and then pulled him back against his body was heavenly.

Struggling to get his arms free of the dangling material, Alistair was fumbling with the buttons at his wrist when Malcolm sat forward.

“Leave it,” he said, lifting his gaze from Alistair’s chest, to his face, then to meet his eyes. “Charlie?”

Once again, Charlie moved away, but this time, he never quite relinquished all contact.

As Alistair concentrated on the music, rolling his hips and melting under Malcolm’s stare, Charlie trailed fingers down along his arms to the shirt.

He expected Charlie to help him get it off. Instead, the other man gathered up the folds of material and wrapped it securely around his wrists, effectively trapping his arms behind his back.

He faltered. The dance stuttered to a stop just ahead of the song ending and the three of them stood in silence.

Charlie ran his hands back up Alistair’s arms, his palms warm, his touch firm, and drew Alistair back against him once more as the next song started. They danced together again, Alistair accepting Charlie’s guiding hands for the first few bars until the music bled into him again and he found his balance, dancing without his arms, almost moving as an extension of Charlie. The beat thrummed through his body, slowing his radical heartbeat to match the rhythm. He watched Malcolm’s attention drift from one to the other of them and slowly let himself glide into the music and the attention and the touches, both of eyes and hands.

Malcolm didn’t leave his chair, but he was a part of the dance, just in how he communicated with his eyes. He didn’t have to speak, and when a look passed between him and Charlie, Alistair was not at all surprised to feel Charlie’s hands drift down to his belt.

It was opened, his pants followed, and he wiggled out of the clothing to the slow seduction of the samba’s lilt.

Malcolm sat back with a sigh and a glance at the contents of the paper bag, which he'd taken inside with him and opened. The contents lay spread within easy access on the table beside him, and his look at them now was significant in some way, though Alistair wasn't sure at first, why.

“What do you think we're planning on doing with a naked you?” Charlie teased, clearly reading his confusion.

“Oh.”

Charlie rubbed his jeans-covered cock over Alistair's ass.

His breath caught the sensation. “Oh!”

Malcolm grinned. “His hands are already back there, Charlie. Maybe it would be fun to watch him do it himself.” Alistair blushed, but he didn't refuse, and Charlie reached for the lube, spurting some on to Alistair's waiting fingers.

He couldn't reach well, had very little freedom of motion, but he could reach, and Charlie guided him around so Malcolm could watch him finger himself. “If you untie me,” he began, but Malcolm cut him off.

“Oh no. This is just the start.” He looked past Alistair. “Charlie?”

Taking his cue, Charlie lubed his own fingers and brushed Alistair's hands out of the way. His fingers were a lot thicker and Malcolm lifted one of Alistair's feet to prop it on the chair cushion between his own knees. It gave Charlie free access and Malcolm a clear view of Charlie stretching him.

Remembering a vague mention of not swearing in front of Malcolm, Alistair clamped his lips closed and only allowed the moans out, afraid to offend his host. But God, Charlie was good at this. His fingers were thick, rough, and his touch barely on the gentler side of force. Always a fan of the idea of letting his partner do the taking, Alistair shifted, pushing himself onto those fingers, taking more and faster than Charlie was giving.

“Not so delicate as he looks,” Malcolm observed. He slapped Alistair's ass hard, making him jump. “Calm down, boy,” he warned. “Let Charlie do his job.”



Alistair moaned and thrust back again, the warning barely registering. Another blow connected, harder and faster, and he yelped.

“Put him down here, Charlie,” Malcolm said, voice hard. “He’s not paying attention.”

Without more warning than that, Alistair felt his feet leave the floor. He tried to move to stop his fall, but his arms, of course, were of no use to him. And he floundered. Charlie’s strong arms steadied him, tilted him, and he was lying face down over Malcolm’s lap.

“Wha—”

“You’re not paying attention,” Malcolm said again, bringing his hand down on Alistair’s ass. “Are you now?” He spanked again and Alistair groaned.

If Malcolm was trying to get him to focus, he wasn’t sure this method was going to work. The music had faded to the background. Charlie was a foggy looming presence over and behind him, and Malcolm’s swats drove him deeper into his own head where the burning skin of his ass and the scrape of his cock over denim was tail-spinning him fast towards orgasm.

And then it stopped. Whatever had passed between Malcolm and Charlie, he had completely missed it, but the next thing he knew, his ass cheeks were being parted and something cold and thick shoved into him.

It burned and stretched, and he groaned, trying to find purchase on the floor with his toes to get away from the sensation, but Malcolm held him fast and the inexorable, slow build to where he thought he’d scream eased in an instant, and he was full, his hole clamped tight around the object but no longer stretched past comfort.

“Oh, fuck.” Muscle control deserted him and he went limp over Malcolm’s legs. Hands stroked over his back, his ass, and his thighs and for a few minute, he hung there, entranced, eyes closed, just remembering how to draw air into his lungs.

“Knees,” Malcolm said softly. He shifted under Alistair and he understood the direction to be aimed at him. He struggled, with Charlie’s help, to get himself upright, then back down to the small rug Malcolm’s feet were on. He knelt there between the man’s legs, gaze fixed on the straining denim at his crotch, not knowing where else to look.

“Are you okay?” Malcolm asked, lifting his chin and looking into his eyes. “The truth.”

Alistair stared up at him, knowing how glassy, flushed, and stunned he would look. But he nodded.

For a few moments, Malcolm studied him. He steadied his breath and his gaze and waited. The plug in his ass was a new sort of sensation. He couldn’t move without feeling how it filled him, how it was, in a weird and alien way, part of him, going where he did, unlike another man’s cock that would pull out if he wanted it to, if he moved the right way. It was trapped in him the same as his hands were trapped behind him.

“Normally,” Malcolm said, “I’d plug up your mouth, too, if you’re prone to swearing.” He ran his fingertips over Alistair’s lips. “But I won’t, because I don’t think you even realize you said it.”

“I’m sorry.”

Malcolm smiled. “I know. It’s okay. But I am going to keep it from happening again. Move back a bit.”

Alistair did as he was told, leaning a bit into Charlie’s hand on his shoulder, against his knee where it brushed along his side, grateful to feel the other man even if he didn’t dare turn his attention from Malcolm to look at him.

Malcolm took the time to open his jeans, pull them off, and remove his shirt. He sat back down in his chair and beckoned Alistair forward again.

“Rather than gag you with a toy, I thought this might be more satisfactory.” He grinned. “For both of us.” He palmed his cock and crooked a finger for Alistair to move close. There was no doubt he had a gorgeous cock, long,

slender, and uncut. It was far more length than Alistair would be able to handle, but he nodded anyway, a rush flaring through him as rug rasped against his knees and heat raced over his skin.

“Good.” Malcolm’s fingers along the side of his face were gentle and reassuring. “Come here, then.” He spread his legs and guided Alistair’s mouth to the tip. “As you like, to start with.”

Alistair licked lightly, tasting his salty, thick flavour and the musk of his skin. He slicked his tongue over the slit, played with the edge of the extra skin around it, and finally, lightly, wrapped his lips over it.

“Now that’s a pretty sight,” Malcolm approved with a sigh. “Don’t you think?”

Behind Alistair, Charlie grunted.

Another wave of heat danced along his limbs, drawing a flush of sweat. His heart raced ahead of him as he worked more of Malcolm onto his mouth.

As Alistair explored and Malcolm fondled his face and hair, the world began to slip away again. It was fascinating how quickly that happened, when he had no control over things. He could, he supposed, pull off and tell them no, but the sting of his hot ass cheeks, and the heaviness of the plug, the constriction around his wrists, the heat of eyes on him, none of it was unwelcome, and giving in to all of it was easy. It felt good. So much better than when he had to encourage a guy to take control, or subtly hint until he got some measure of what he craved.

Here, he had no time to crave. Here, he only had the next order, the next moment, the next breath, heartbeat, and throb of his cock. Every sound he milked from Malcolm was a victory. Every wave of heat from Charlie’s nearness, soothed him closer to something that wasn’t quite orgasm, but was no less pleasurable. Being the center of their combined attention was a rush unlike anything physical touch could trump.

When Malcolm’s hips began to move and the caresses turned to gripping and holding, he couldn’t help but moan and wiggle to get better control over what he was allowed.

It only made Malcolm hold him tighter, and eventually, Charlie's hand clamped down on his shoulder.

"I think we need something more, Charlie," Malcolm said, pulling Alistair off by his hair. He lifted Alistair's face until they were gazing into each other's eyes again. "You keep looking at me." He glided fingers over Alistair's jaw, and as soft as the touch was, it was the most domineering thing Malcolm had yet done. As though appraising a possession he was thinking of purchasing. "Charlie's going to fix you up."

"How?"

Malcolm smiled. "You'll have to spread your knees and feet apart," was all he offered in reply.

Behind him, Charlie positioned his legs how they wanted, and he glanced back to watch Charlie buckle stiff black leather around each ankle. His heart jumped ahead of its normal rhythm and his breath caught as the clank of metal drew his attention to a long bar that Charlie positioned between his feet.

"You're okay," Malcolm assured him drawing his head back around and meeting his eye again.

"This is..." Alistair attempted to swallow, but his mouth was too dry. His eyes stung.

Malcolm's fingers tightened in his hair. "Okay," Malcolm assured him. He wasn't asking if Alistair was okay, only telling him there was nothing to worry about.

Alistair nodded.

"You're a good boy," Malcolm whispered. "I'd almost think you've done this before."

This time, Alistair shook his head, blushed, but offered what explanation he had. "Read about it. Seen a few movies."

"Dreamt about it," Malcolm said. Again, he wasn't asking.

"Yes."

Malcolm ran a thumb over the side of his face, down and across his lips. “And is it everything you dreamt, I wonder?”

Alistair closed his eyes and turned slightly into the touch. He kissed the pad of Malcolm’s thumb. Parts of him had begun to ache; his shoulders, from the position of his arms and his knees. The floor was hard under the rug. He tried to shift his weight only to realize Charlie had finished his task and his feet were now attached to either end of that bar.

Malcolm stood, fingers trailing off Alistair’s face, and Alistair opened his eyes to watch him. The man circled him, appraising him, eyes dark, face a picture of impassive calculation.

“What do you think, Charlie?”

Charlie shuffled behind him. Alistair wished he could turn around to see his face, but between his hands being tied and his feet spread by that bar, he didn’t dare twist too much. If he overbalanced, he’d end up with a jarred shoulder or broken nose. So he stayed still, feeling the mass of Charlie’s bulk at his back, and concentrated on breathing.

“He’s pretty,” Charlie said at last. Fingers combed through his hair.

“You want him?”

Charlie grunted. “Course.”

“I mean, do you want to screw him?”

A sharp slap stung Alistair’s ass and he yelped.

“Yeah,” Charlie breathed.

Malcolm circled back around in front of him and lifted his chin in one cupped palm. “You hear that, boy? He wants to screw you.”

Alistair would have nodded, but Malcolm held his head immobile. “I heard.”

“And?”

He swallowed, met Malcolm’s frightening, dark gaze, and tumbled into it.

“What if I wasn’t finished with you sucking my cock?”

“I can do both.”

“At once?”

Alistair fought to keep his focus, to stay present as Malcolm studied him, gauged his compliance. Rather than answer, he simply waited, willing to accept whatever he decided. He might have read about this, and envied the men in the videos he'd seen, but he wasn't experienced like Malcolm and Charlie clearly were. So he waited and relied on them to decide what he would do for them. It was enough they'd taken him this far. Now he knew he liked what he'd imagined he would, he could accept their guidance without worry.

Malcolm palmed his cock and stepped closer. Alistair didn't need to be told to open his mouth. He didn't need cajoling to accept the unspoken command.

Malcolm's cock slid over his tongue, deep into his mouth, and a hand nestled into his hair. Something hard angled across his back, and after a moment, he realized it was Charlie's hand in his hair, and Charlie's leg bracing him, holding him in place where he had very little room to move away from Malcolm's slowly rocking hips. Swallowing around Malcolm's length, he gazed up through his lashes, over the rims of his glasses, to the blur that was Malcolm's face. The pressure at his back grew, and Charlie was leaning over him, drawn in by Malcolm's hand in his hair, and being kissed in a way that made him tighten his own fingers threaded through Alistair's locks.

Alistair groaned at the pressure and the tug. Malcolm cupped his face, letting him know he wasn't forgotten, and he did his best to be more than a passive receptacle.

Soon the kiss ended and both men stepped away, leaving Alistair swaying between them, balanced only by Charlie's hand on his head and Malcolm's expectation that he could endure whatever they offered him.

“Let's get him up,” Malcolm said softly.

Together, they lifted Alistair off his knees, right off his feet, so he could swing the bar around and land, flat-footed, legs spread wide, on the warm floorboards.

“How strong are your abs?” Malcolm asked, settling on one of the bar stools Charlie fetched for him. He ran a hand over Alistair’s flat stomach and nodded approvingly. “Guess we’ll find out. You won’t be needing these for now.” He removed Alistair’s glasses and set them on the table next to the condoms.

Watching him stroke himself made Alistair’s blood boil. And his heart zing in an unpredictable rhythm of heavy thudding and fast, tripping cadences.

When Malcolm beckoned, Alistair shuffled the few steps forward and carefully lowered himself, bending at the waist until he could lick at the drops of pre-come on Malcolm’s dick.

He must have been quite a picture, mouth full, hands tied, legs wide, and ass in the air. He’d been in a lot of vulnerable positions in his life, and felt a lot less safe fully clothed in the street than he felt in that moment. When Charlie’s hands began caressing him, legs, ass, back, and Malcolm’s soft sounds of pleasure reached him, there was nothing about the situation that left him uneasy. He settled more comfortably into his task, knowing he could give good head, and being allowed, for the moment, to do so at his own pace.

Charlie’s shuffling and touching were distracting, but pleasant. The plug being removed had him sucking in a breath, his head still in Malcolm’s lap as Mal caressed his hair and soothed him. Then the blunt pressure of Charlie’s cock made him moan and tense.

“Relax,” Malcolm soothed, petting his hair and back. “I didn’t tell you to stop, did I?” He traced a finger along Alistair’s lips, still formed around his cock, though he wasn’t actively doing anything but holding Malcolm in his mouth.

Charlie pushed forward, breaching him, and the burn eclipsed everything. He was far bigger than that plug had been. Huge, endlessly long, it seemed, and Alistair couldn’t breathe around the all-consuming sensation of being completely overtaken.

“There you go,” Malcolm praised him and stroked his back. “You see? You can take it.” He rocked his hips, reminding Alistair he had bragged he could take them both.

Alistair swallowed around him, moans coming unhindered as Charlie slowly pulled back and filled him again. It was possibly the gentlest fucking he’d ever received, but he could feel the strain as Charlie gripped his hips, braced his legs along Alistair’s thighs and ass and controlled his movements with a sort of stiff rigidity that told him Charlie was desperately holding himself back.

“You see how gentle he’s being?” Malcolm asked.

Alistair nodded. The deep burn had eased towards pleasure now and he swayed with Charlie’s movements, coming off Malcolm’s cock most of the way under the control of Charlie’s grip.

Malcolm pulled his cock free and lifted Alistair’s head, chin in the palm of his hand. “Second thoughts?”

Alistair shook his head. “No, sir.”

“Sir, is it?” Malcolm leaned over and kissed him hard, taking his breath and not allowing him a chance to pull in another before he was swallowing cock again. He had no control over how deep he took either of them. The position was designed to give Charlie most of the control over that, over how fast, and how hard, and Alistair forced himself to relax enough to give the control to them.

Staying on his feet as he was rocked between them took co-ordination and effort. He wasn’t passive. He couldn’t be, or he’d end up on his face on the floor. But all his efforts went into staying vertical. They weren’t fucking him for his pleasure, he realized.

That was something he hadn’t anticipated from the books or videos. He wasn’t the one being pleased, here. He was the toy. Not that he wasn’t enjoying himself, but the realization that his comfort was secondary to their pleasure was a breath-stealing insight.



A shiver ran under his skin, scalp to toes, resonating through to his bones. Charlie thrust, riding over that tiny bundle of nerves and sparking his body to life. Every touch, every grappling hand, thrust and tug and retreat echoed down deeper than anything had reached in a very long time. For an instant, he was back in the skin of a kid who didn't dare look the other way from the bullies on the school ground, who couldn't turn and run or stand and fight, and that helpless feeling washing through him was terrifying.

Charlie's vicelike grip crushed bone, Malcolm's fingers tore his hair, and he split open. Just for an instant. Then Charlie's voice dragged him back to their living room, Malcolm's soft grunt and lax grip preceding him stiffening and pouring his release into Alistair's mouth cemented his attention in the here-and-now and a moment later, he could feel Charlie's throbbing cock, his rigid muscles as he spilled into the condom.

Everything collapsed back in on him and Alistair choked and sputtered as Malcolm pulled out and helped him to straighten. It was a useless effort. He had no strength. His legs ignored the plea from his brain to work, to hold him up, to just move, and give him space and perspective. Then he remembered why he couldn't move and the shivering started again.

"You're okay," Malcolm soothed, gathering him up close as Charlie knelt and unbuckled the cuffs around his ankles.

The bar fell away with a clatter and it didn't matter. His legs still refused his commands, because Malcolm scooped him up and carried him towards the bed.

He groaned and thrashed, unable to push himself clear, still bound as he was.

"*Shh.*" Malcolm deposited him on the bed and he rolled to his side, determined to get to his knees, to get his feet under him.

Charlie pinned him easily, a hand on his shoulder. Not rough. Just imperative. The bed tipped and rocked as both men climbed on with him.

"No more," he whispered as he struggled to gain some sort of autonomy, to catch his breath, to still his racing heart before it burst from his chest. He hated

himself for wimping out on them, but he was done. He couldn't get the equilibrium back. He couldn't calm himself down. Understanding they meant him no harm was a useless idea as that moment of understanding just exactly how helpless he was lingered.

“No more,” Malcolm assured him softly. “You're finished, Alistair. You were perfect.”

Alistair wiggled and finally managed to prop himself awkwardly on one elbow and peer up at them. “What?”

Malcolm's smile was radiant. “Listen to me, okay?”

Alistair nodded and Malcolm brushed fingers over his cheek. When it had gotten wet, he had no idea, but Malcolm brushed tears from the other side, too, and gently kissed his lips. “You have to lie on your stomach for just a moment so we can untie you, okay?”

Alistair stared at him, at his lips, still soft and curved gently upward, his hair, messy and his eyes, dark, invitingly kind.

“What?”

Charlie chuckled. “Roll over. Let us get you free, babe.”

Alistair responded to the deep, urgent, but infinitely tender voice and turned to discover Charlie sitting next to him, naked now, as well, and flushed with happiness.

Heart still stuttering slightly, Alistair swallowed a bit of the bitter fear and nodded, understanding seeping in at last. He struggled to sit up, watching them reach to help but hold back in deference to his grunts of annoyance and sharp shake of his head.

He could do it himself. He could. Finally managing a mostly upright position, he waited as Charlie carefully unwound his shirt and loosed his arms.

Fireworks raced up his muscles and he groaned, flopping back onto the bed. His fingertips tingled, sending sparks through his brain, flashing over his vision.

“Oh God.”

Malcolm hovered, leaning on one arm and gazing down at him. “That was hard, what you did.”

Alistair gazed up at him, processing, searching for a way back to them, out of the jumble of his own thoughts.

“Take your time.” Malcolm’s light touch moved over Alistair’s face. His eyes were a fascinating shade of dark. Impossible to tell in the dimness if they were brown or black. A smoky blue ring near the irises made them incredibly otherworldly, and Alistair blinked. He wasn’t imagining it. Malcolm was the most beautiful man he knew. He blinked again, realizing how close the other man had to be if he could see him clearly without his glasses.

When he opened his eyes again, Malcolm was gone and Charlie was there, a hand resting, warm and comforting on his chest. “Before you pass out, can we get clean and under the covers?” he asked.

“What?”

He chuckled. “Just let me take care of you, please?”

Alistair frowned. “I’m...” *fine*. Confused was what he was. So he just nodded.

Charlie urged him up, guided him to the bathroom and under the warm spray already flowing from the shower. The visit was brief. Enough to get the sweat and stink of adrenaline washed off. Long enough for Charlie’s thick fingers to delve between his ass cheeks and sluice away the lube dribbling out of him, coating him. And long enough to be thoroughly pampered, then thoroughly, very gently and determinedly, kissed until he was limp, moaning, and hoping it might never stop.

Soon enough, he was led back to bed and climbed in without protest. If he’d lost himself for a little while in the midst of their scene, he was content to know Malcolm and Charlie knew exactly where he was and what he needed. He lay down, allowed Malcolm to fold him into an embrace that left his head on the other man’s chest, and promptly fell asleep.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

If falling asleep had been a lazy, hazy pleasure, waking was even more so. The first thing Alistair became aware of was hands. They smoothed random patterns over his skin. Body heat surrounded him and a man's chest hair chafed lightly against the smoothness of his own body. That sensation sent a slow delicious tingle through him and he sighed softly, rubbing himself against hard muscle to feel more of it.

He was manhandled away a bit—just enough for one of those hands to slide over his chest.

“You wax?” The question was low and as lazy as he felt.

Alistair sighed, arched into the touch and nodded, unable, for the moment to identify the owner of the voice. “Tweeze, really. Not enough to bother with wax.”

That got him a low chuckle as the hand continued to roam. “How far down?”

“Mmmm,” was his only reply as his half-hard cock was fondled to full attention.

He thought maybe he should rouse himself enough to at least know whose hands were all over him. But did it matter? Malcolm or Charlie could have anything from him they wanted, so he snuggled closer and let the thought drift away.

“You do know if you keep up the wiggling and sighing you’ll be taken full advantage of, right?”

Alistair nodded, head pillowed in the lovely, curly nest of chest hair. “Molest away.” *I’m yours*, his mind whispered. Not out loud, though because he had four days left and only four days.

Fingers knocked the underside of his chin and he reluctantly looked up.

The smoky blue rings were wider this morning, opening up Malcolm’s gaze, lighting him from the inside.

Mesmerized, Alistair stared until Malcolm lifted his head off his pillow enough to lay a kiss on Alistair that made his toes curl. It was long and languorous good morning kiss that ignored bad breath and sleepy, lazy brains.

Malcolm continued his exploration of Alistair's body, taking his time over the places that made Alistair sigh. Eventually, he covered Alistair's ass. More awake, now, he dipped between his cheeks, playing over his hole, kneading and prodding, never actually entering, much to Alistair's growing dismay and despite his ever more insistent attempts to achieve even the slightest penetration.

“Eager?”

Alistair only moaned and arched his back, pushing his ass towards the touch.

Malcolm had strong, very capable hands. He smelled heavenly. No one had eyes like his. Already, Alistair was cataloguing the things he'd miss. The things every guy, from that day onward, would have to live up to and most likely fail.

“Hey,” Malcolm said softly.

For a moment, Alistair tried to focus on why Malcolm wanted his attention. A heartbeat later, a sound in the doorway behind him told him they were no longer alone.

“Check this out,” Malcolm said, parting Alistair's ass cheeks to show off his hole, twitching from the attention and wanting more. If he had even the least capacity left in him to be shy about what either of these men thought of him, it drifted away on the breath of a whistle Charlie let out.

Alistair glanced over his shoulder to see the other man entering the room with a huge tray loaded down with mugs, coffee, toast and fruit. Charlie smiled and winked.

“Pay attention, now,” Malcolm whispered, and Alistair turned back to him. Behind him, the tray hit the dresser top with a clatter and a moment later, the mattress dipped and Charlie joined them.

It was only moments before Charlie began gliding big hands over Alistair's legs and hips and ass. "You like being touched."

Alistair sighed, nodded, and wriggled a little closer to Malcolm, gravitating to his warmth as cool breezes from the open window wafted over his bare skin.

"Show me again, Mal," Charlie said, leaning down to kiss Alistair's hip softly.

Alistair moaned as Malcolm hauled his leg up, bending it to lay it along Malcolm's abdomen and parting his cheeks once more. Charlie didn't just look. He took the liberty of exploring Alistair's ass, fondled his balls, rolling them gently in his palm as he rubbed a finger over his opening. In no time, between Malcolm's roving hands and generously attentive mouth and Charlie's fingers, Alistair was moaning and writhing between them.

His cock, fully hard, leaked as he rubbed against Malcolm's thigh, alternately humping him and arching to lift his ass into Charlie's maddeningly light touch.

"More" he moaned. "Please."

"Bet he can get off on just this," Charlie said, wiggling his finger over Alistair's entrance.

Malcolm moved his leg in concert with Alistair's ever more frantic rocking. "No bet," Malcolm crooned, rubbing circles over Alistair's back and kissing a line down the side of his neck. "He's close."

And he was. As frustrating as Charlie's teasing finger was, rubbing and prodding but never quite breaching, Alistair still rode the wave of pleasure towards orgasm.

This was the opposite of the night before when he had been a tool for his lovers' pleasure. This moment was about him. As utterly about him as it was possible to be. They drove him towards release in a gentle but relentless press of touch, whispers and encouragement.

Still, there was something missing. An edge to their touch just not present, and Alistair whimpered.

“What is it?” Malcolm asked, nuzzling at his neck. “What?”

Alistair groaned and writhed, arching as Charlie prodded, growling in frustration as he drew his finger back from Alistair’s movement.

“Frustrated?” Charlie asked.

Alistair groaned, beyond speech and wanted to swear at them, knowing it wouldn’t get him what he wanted, but not sure, even, what that was.

Then Malcolm threaded fingers into his hair, pulled his head back and took his mouth, thrusting his tongue inside and straining his neck to claim him so thoroughly. And that did it. That catapulted him into a frenzy of desire that pushed any clear thoughts out of his head.

He gave in to the kiss, and then, second by second, to their ministrations, letting them have their way, drive him crazy, refuse to send him completely over the edge. Letting them play with him like a mouse between two bored cats.

As long as Malcolm maintained his hold, his control, Alistair could relax into the teasing, ride the wave of pleasure they were offering.

“Now you get it,” Charlie crooned. “Let us do this.”

Alistair rocked into his hands, feeling Charlie’s strength and size as he cupped his ass, felt wave after wave of pleasure as he rubbed himself against Malcolm, and the tide of bliss rose and lifted him with it until he was balanced, barely keeping his head above the ocean of sensation.

It was Malcolm’s fingers in his hair, Charlie’s strength, gripping his thigh in its position across Malcolm’s body, the containment of their hands on him that sent him over at last and he clenched, every muscle stiffening as he finally came with a deep groan.

“Oh my God, that is gorgeous,” Charlie said in a hushed voice. At last, his finger, slicked now, drove inside Alistair’s clutching, tight hole and Alistair gasped.

There was no time to catch his breath before Charlie was working him open, stretching and preparing him, and he was still in a stunned stupor when

Charlie's big cock worked inside him. Grappling for a handhold on something, he found Malcolm's hand, his wrist, and would have held on tight, but his own wrist was clasped and his arm hauled behind his back.

The restriction, far from worrying him, calmed him, gave shape to the world swimming around him, and he manoeuvred himself back into his place between them as Charlie began to move inside him.

Lying on his side, one arm trapped in Malcolm's grip behind him, one leg pressed up against his own ribcage, his upper body laying half over Malcolm's body, it should have been a position to allow for long, slow morning languor. With Malcolm holding him, though, Charlie had more freedom to push deeper, thrust faster and harder, and he did. Alistair relaxed into the rhythm and the restraint giving them whatever they wanted from him.

It was a perfect way to greet the day, made better as Charlie moaned and stilled, body tight, cock throbbing hard as he dumped his load into the condom.

When it was over, he flopped onto his back beside them. Malcolm eased his tight grip on Alistair's body and squirmed until Alistair was laying on his back on the mattress between them. Malcolm fished for something beside the bed, found a T-shirt and used it to clean Alistair's spunk off himself, and the lube off Alistair before handing it to Charlie, who gave his cock a quick swipe as he tossed the condom into the trash.

"Morning," Alistair sighed, letting his eyes drift closed. The scents of sex and sweat and early morning sunshine warmed him from the inside out.

"I brought coffee," Charlie muttered.

"Mmm."

"And toast."

Alistair nodded. "Toast is good."

Silence for a few heartbeats.

"Love toast," Alistair said, letting out another contented sigh.



“Not enough to get up and get it from across the room?” Malcolm asked. He sounded a lot more clear-headed than Alistair felt or Charlie sounded as they chorused their denial.

“Lazy ingrates,” Malcolm muttered happily.

“Mmm.” Alistair said again. “What’s your hurry?” He blinked up at Malcolm.

“Four days left,” Malcolm said softly. “I plan on making the most of every second you’re not packing.” He climbed back on the bed, straddling Alistair and leaning down to kiss him heavily.

Alistair groaned. “If you two keep this up, I’m not going to be flying anywhere. Not unless the flight attendants have those little donut pillows.”

Charlie laughed and shoved Malcolm off him, grabbed his wrists and pinned his hands over his head, taking his turn at Alistair’s mouth, kissing him until he couldn’t breathe. “You think it’s all about fucking?” Charlie asked.

“Isn’t it?” Alistair grinned. “Has been so far.”

Charlie shook his head. “It’s been about dancing and unpacking and getting to know you.”

“And now I’m leaving.”

“You were always leaving.” He smiled. “And we all knew that.”

“I guess.” Alistair stared up at him. “Yeah.”

“Yeah.” Charlie caressed his cheek. “What are you thinking?”

Alistair shook his head, turning as he did to kiss the tips of Charlie’s fingers.

“Answer the question, Alistair,” Malcolm said, giving Charlie a little shove to get him off Alistair. He handed out coffees and joined them on the bed as Alistair pushed up to rest against the pillows and headboard

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Oh, it matters.” Charlie gave him a gentle smile. “It matters. Tell us.”

“We knew I was leaving,” Alistair said softly. “This is okay because you don’t really want me to stay.”

“Knowing you have to get on with your life is not the same thing as not wanting you to stay,” Charlie assured him. “It’s new.”

Alistair nodded.

“I think I don’t want you to go, but it is so new.” Charlie voicing his wish was comforting and Alistair nodded. “I don’t even know what I want.”

“We’ve never done this before, either,” Malcolm said. “What I know for sure is how you talk about school and what’s coming for you, and I know how excited you are for that. I would never want to change that for you.”

Once more, Alistair nodded.

“You are still excited for it. Aren’t you?”

“Yeah. Of course”—and almost in the same breath—“I’ll miss you.”

“And we’ll miss you,” Malcolm assured him. “But Charlie’s right. We’re a stop on your road.” He kissed Alistair gently. “Okay?”

“I—not really.” Alistair gazed into his coffee and nodded. “But yeah.”

“Okay.” Malcolm sat back and patted the mattress next to him. “Come here.”

Not needing a second invitation Alistair scooted over, tucked himself in close to Malcolm’s side and sipped the lukewarm coffee. He didn’t care to heat it up if it meant one of them would have to leave the room to do it. He’d drink it cold.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

Four days passed in a blur. It wasn't all sex. There was a lot of that. But there was just as much help packing and shipping Alistair's belongings, lunches in town with Alistair's mother and even a couple of quiet evenings on the couch watching movies during which Alistair made popcorn for them, brewed iced coffee and cleaned up as Charlie and Malcolm wandered off to bed. He thought he'd be jealous the first time they disappeared into their room without him.

He wasn't.

Content and tired, he curled up on the couch with another movie, of which he watched about five minutes before falling asleep. In the morning, Charlie fetched him back to the bedroom instead of coffee, and they did things to him that made him blush as hard as he had the first night. It felt like a reward for not making a deal out of being left on his own the night before.

They didn't talk any further about his imminent departure. It was happening and they all knew it, and so they took full advantage of the remaining days. Charlie and Malcolm were generous in so many ways, including making it okay for him to begin to feel the excitement again.

It was a big deal, after all. He'd worked hard for a year and a half to be able to afford tuition and have some money in place for an apartment. He had a friend offering him a job in his field of study. He was about to embark on his life. It *was* exciting. And it was sad to leave his new lovers, but knowing they were happy for him made it easier. Knowing how much they had taught him about himself made it easier, too.

"Shouldn't you be spending your last night at home with your mom?" Charlie asked as they dried and stored dishes after supper.

Alistair shook his head. "She's out. She made a point of telling me this morning that she would be out all night. I think she has a..."

"Boyfriend?"

Alistair shuddered, but nodded. “She said she’d meet me at the airport for breakfast. He grinned and sighed. “I’m happy for her.”

“Worried about leaving her all alone?”

“I was a bit, but she’s happy.” He glanced over. “And she told me to make sure you and Malcolm know to keep in touch. She likes you two.”

“Wonder if she knows you’re sleeping with us.”

Alistair shrugged and another shudder went through him. “She’s open minded and all, but... don’t tell her that.”

“You know we wouldn’t,” Malcolm chimed in from where he sat at the table sipping his coffee.

“I do know.” He glanced over and found Malcolm was studying him.

“You want us to keep in touch with her?”

Alistair nodded. “She likes you. She spent so much time looking after me, doing things to make sure I was okay. Working and everything. I know she has friends, and people other than her kid in her life, but still.”

Malcolm smiled. “We’ll keep you in the loop, Alistair. We’ll stay in touch.”

Relief washed through Alistair and he turned back to the sink.

“It won’t be a quickie when you come home for holidays, though,” Malcolm said. Both Alistair and Charlie turned to stare at him.

“I was thinking about this. It has to be all or nothing, or none of us will ever move on. Since you won’t be here for all of it—”

“It has to be nothing, Mal? Really?” Charlie asked.

“It has to be. Alistair will have a life in Baltimore, and he should live it. We’ll be here.” He met Charlie’s gaze and smiled, and it might have been a slightly sad expression. “Maybe we won’t be able to just wait until he can afford a trip home, or we have time off to go to him. Maybe our life will move on too.”

“You’ll meet some other guy, you mean,” Alistair said.

“You’ll meet other guys, too, Alistair.” Malcolm met his accusing gaze calmly. “And you should. We all should. I have no doubt if this is what’s meant to be, then it will be.”

“But you don’t really think it is,” Alistair couldn’t quite keep the accusation out of his voice.

Malcolm smiled. “I think it’s the first time any of us have done this, and I, for one, need to step back and figure out what it means.” He glanced to Charlie, and there was uncertainty in his expression.

Charlie nodded. “Okay.”

Alistair turned back to the sink and said nothing.

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“He’s pissed, you know,” Charlie said later as he and Malcolm sat on the back porch and watched Alistair trimming a lilac bush. It pleased Malcolm to see him working, even if he’d been finding busy work to do all evening. It turned out, when Charlie had shown him how to prune the bushes, he’d discovered the task a soothing one. Between them, even in four days, the yard had begun to look a little more kempt, less jungle-like. Now he was using the chore to avoid them. Anything to keep from resolving the earlier conversation.

Malcolm nodded. “He needs time to figure out we’re right.”

“You mean you’re right. I haven’t necessarily agreed with you yet, either.”

Malcolm looked up at his lover. “Charlie.”

“Don’t use that tone on me. You don’t get to dictate this one without hearing what I think.” He glared down, but the look was softened by worry. Maybe even fear, and Malcolm reached for his hand.

Charlie eased away for a moment. “I feel stuff too, Mal.” Then he inched his fingers back within Malcolm’s reach.

Malcolm’s gut twisted but he smiled as he all but snatched his lover’s hand into his. “I know you do. And that’s why I promised we’d keep in touch, and

why I insist it's just friends once he's gone. I mean it, Charlie. I'm not being arbitrary." He shifted around to face Charlie and picked up his other hand. "You gave me the reins a long time ago, yes?"

After a slight hesitation, Charlie nodded.

"I've thought hard about this, I promise. Up to now it's been about letting me have control in bed, about you silently agreeing to serve me the rest of the time, and me quietly accepting that, because it makes us most happy."

"Yeah."

Malcolm drew in a deep breath. "It was okay to go on without really talking about it because it was working. But there was going to come a time when we tested this thing. When you were going to have to let me call the shots, and not about when or where or how we fuck, or who does the dishes, or who gets the shower first. Some choices were going to get hard, and either you trust me to do what's best for us both or you don't."

Charlie remained silent, staring at him, big brown eyes huge and vulnerable. It twisted Malcolm's gut tighter and tighter to see his lover so frightened. But the fright was what gave him the strength to take the control Charlie craved and make it real. Deep enough to protect him even when he didn't know he needed protecting.

Drawing in a heavy breath, Malcolm forged ahead. "Trust me in this. I'm not saying it has to be this way—"

"Because if we make a commitment to Al, you have to honour it. You can't bring some other guy in when you think I might be slipping—"

"Quiet, Charlie," Malcolm said softly. Firmly. "Don't interrupt me again."

Charlie snapped his mouth shut and stared, anger sneaking in under the fear, hands clenching until his grip hurt.

"Am I scared you'll stray?"

Charlie shrugged.

“No, Charlie. The answer is no, I’m not afraid you’ll leave me over sex. I trust you to stay and help me through when I freak out. It’s what you do. It’s what you give me. I trust you.” He tightened his grip on Charlie’s fingers, too and was gratified to feel a reciprocating strength in the connection, and less pain from his desperate grip. A little bit of the fear faded from his eyes.

“You like this guy a lot,” Malcolm said.

After a heartbeat and a glance to Alistair across the lawn, Charlie nodded. “Yeah. ’Course I do.”

“So do I.”

“So then—”

Malcolm lifted one eyebrow and thankfully, Charlie shut up.

“I want him to go off and live his life and be happy not pining for something halfway across the country. I want to give you what you need to be happy, when you need it, not when we might be able to get him home or go there. This is not a long-distance sort of set up and trying to make it that will only break it. You have to trust me. To keep him, we have to let him go.”

Charlie sighed. “I’ll miss him.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“You’ll miss him.”

Malcolm sighed. “Yeah. I know.”

“I don’t want to replace him.”

“That isn’t what it’s about. He had his place with us for a little while and now he’s moving on with his life. We can’t stand in the way of that. He’s going to find a guy—or guys—who are going to be there for him when he needs them. We have to let him do that. We aren’t going to replace him. He’ll still be ours, just in a different capacity.” He grinned trying to bring some lightness to the situation. “You just won’t be allowed to fuck him anymore.”

“This seemed like such a good idea,” Charlie lamented.

“It was. It is. And we were really lucky to find Alistair. He’s good for us. Maybe he’s given us something no one else could have.”

“A hole when he moves out?”

“A chance to understand how this works, to know it can work, with the right guy. But he isn’t the right guy, because if he was, he wouldn’t be moving to Baltimore or we would be moving with him, but we aren’t, and he is.”

Charlie stared at him a long time.

“Trust me, Charlie. This is best.”

Charlie swallowed hard. “I have to, don’t I, because I don’t know how else to do this.”

Malcolm smiled. “That’s why you have me.”

The vast uncertainty in Charlie’s eyes was heart-stopping, but Malcolm didn’t look away. He saw there when Charlie made the leap of faith before anything ever came out of his mouth.

“That’s why I have you,” he agreed in a whisper.

Malcolm stood, drew him up and pulled his shaking lover into his arms, kissing him, containing him in the moment for a long time, cementing Charlie’s acceptance of his decision inside all the ways their relationship had slowly come to this point of no return.

Malcolm had made a hard, unhappy decision that was going to hurt them all a little bit right now but he knew in his heart, it would be best for them in the long run. It would set them all on the road to getting over each other in the best possible way.

He was still holding Charlie when Alistair clumped up the steps to stand outside their tight embrace.

“This is it, then?” he asked. He sounded so sad.

Malcolm held out an arm, then Charlie did and Alistair joined them. “This is it,” Malcolm agreed, kissing the top of his head.

“I still want to stay here tonight,” Alistair whispered. “Can I?”



“You’ll stay here tonight.” Malcolm agreed. “Go inside and get cleaned up.” He pulled back to look Alistair in the eye. “Be thorough.” He kissed him, deep and demanding and tapped his ass as he turned to go inside.

“I think you just made the kid’s day.”

“I just made your day.” Malcolm kissed Charlie, too, in a way he hadn’t kissed him in months. As deep and demanding as he had Alistair, feeling the response deep in his gut. He felt Charlie’s release in the way his entire body relaxed, in the sigh that came out of him.

He felt the trust flow between them again and sighed himself. He wasn’t sure how they had sipped so far from this center. Now, with Charlie’s acquiescence and the way his lover hung onto him and sighed into the stroke of his hand over his back, he thought that as little as he’d liked making the decision to let Alistair go, it had been the right one.

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The rising sun found them pulling into a parking space at the airport. They found Alistair’s mother sitting at a small table in one of the cafes across from the check-in counters. She wasn’t alone.

At her table was a handsome man in his early forties. He had on expensive jeans and a designer T-shirt under a cashmere sport jacket and long-toed leather dress shoes. Everything about him spoke of understated, but undeniable class.

“Mom?” Alistair stopped, Charlie and Malcolm at his back.

“Hi, honey.” She stood and her companion rose with her. “This is Bob. Bob, my son, Alistair.”

“Hi.” Bob nodded and held out a hand which Alistair skipped a beat before taking and shaking.

“Hi,” he managed, before Malcolm nudged him and he introduced them.

“Sit,” his mother said, and Bob reached to hold her chair and push it gently in as she sat.

“I ordered a pot of coffee for you boys.” Her eyes sparkled as she smiled and poured. “I thought you all might be a bit tired this morning.”

Alistair could not have stopped the blush if his life depended on it, and he caught Charlie grinning at him. “So, Bob, how do you know my mother?” he asked.

The question worked to deflect the attention from their night’s activities, and Bob commenced the explanation of how he had met Alistair’s mother when she helped him to pick out the jacket he had on his back. They’d had a lot of laughs choosing his wardrobe for a baby shower.

“Easy to be relaxed around him when I was sure he was gay,” Alistair’s mom said.

“I liked her right off.” Bob said, his gaze locked with Alistair’s. “She’s a smart, funny, sexy lady.” He laid his hand over hers and smiled down at her. “Thank goodness my niece dragged me to the mall that day, or I might never have met her.”

Alistair stared at them for a few minutes before excusing himself to wash his hands before their meal arrived.

Seconds after he retreated to the restroom, Malcolm walked in.

“You okay, Alistair?”

“He’s ten years younger than she is!”

“And obviously isn’t after her money.”

Alistair snorted. “We don’t have any.”

“But he does, Alistair. Did you see what he was wearing?”

“Yes.” Alistair glared at himself in the mirror.

“And the way he looks at her?”

Alistair shuddered. “My mom, Mal.”

Malcolm rested a hand on his shoulder. “And the way she looks at him?”

Alistair sighed. “Yeah.” He met Malcolm’s gaze in the mirror. “This is it,” he whispered.

Malcolm smiled. "It's time."

"You'll—"

"Keep in touch. Of course."

"Keep an eye on them."

Malcolm grinned. "On your mom, the cougar?"

"Oh God. Really?" Alistair glared and Malcolm laughed.

"Come and eat, yeah?" Malcolm said.

Alistair turned to study him. "One last order?"

Malcolm cupped his cheek and kissed him lightly. "If I must."

"You don't." He glanced up through his lashes. "But you could anyway."

"Get out there," Malcolm growled good-naturedly, slapping his ass as he scurried past.

"Everything all right?" Bob asked as they returned.

"Yes," Alistair smiled at him and was rewarded with a relieved grin in return, and breakfast proceeded with small talk and decent food.

When it was time for him to say good-bye, his mother took him aside to wish him safe travels.

"Do me a favour, Mom?" he asked, glancing to where Bob, Malcolm and Charlie still chatted over coffee. "Keep an eye on them? Make sure they're okay."

"They strike me as perfectly capable young men, Alistair."

"And they are." He bit his lip. "Just that I'm sort of leaving them in a spot."

"You're leaving them period." She smiled kindly. "Do you think I don't understand the looks?"

"Mom," Alistair warned. "Please don't."

"You're my son." She smiled and patted his cheek with a soft sigh. "But you're also a grown man, and I can't say I was thrilled with all this, but who

am I to judge, after everything with your father? You are making the right decision, though, going to school.”

“You never said a word about it.”

“You thought I didn’t know?”

“I didn’t really want to find out if you did, to be honest.”

“Well, I did.”

“So why didn’t you say anything? Why not use your considerable influence to make sure I left?”

“Because honey, it isn’t my life. I saw what parental interference did to your father. We both lived with it. And we both did our best to raise you to make your own way in the world. I couldn’t make this decision for you.”

“But you think I made the right one.”

“I think if it’s meant to be, Malcolm and Charlie will be here when you come back.”

“That’s what Malcolm said.”

She smiled. “He’s a very kind young man. Wise.”

Alistair nodded. “He told me I have to go. Talked me and Charlie into believing him. Talked himself into believing it, I think.”

“And what do you honestly feel?”

“I want to do this. I’ve been dreaming of it for years. I don’t think I could stay and not always wonder what I gave up.”

“So he’s right, then.”

Alistair nodded. “He’s right. That’s why Charlie’s with him.” He drew in a breath and met his mother gaze. “Why I was with them. Now I have to go.”

She nodded and hugged him close. “Now you have to go.”

“And about this Bob guy?”

Her smile was radiant. “I should have told you about him months ago.”

“Months?” he boggled at her.

“Well, it was new.” A faint pink infused her cheeks. “And he’s young. I wanted to be sure he was sure before I brought him into your life.”

“Good God, Mom, he’s what? Forty?”

“Forty-three.”

“So twelve years, then.”

This time her flush was filled with a kind of pride and she nodded.

“So he’s not all that young, and I’m not a kid anymore.”

“No.” She sighed. “I suppose not.”

“He’s good to you?”

“He’s a very good man. Alistair. His first wife died five years ago. I think he’s very brave to risk again.”

Alistair nodded as she straightened his collar. “Honey, I’m glad you’re going. I want to like your friends, but I can’t really, honestly say I’m sorry to see this arrangement come to an end.”

“Mom—” He gazed down at her. “Never mind.”

Her smile, though, was knowing. “You found something. I know.” She blinked a bit, and just when he thought she might cry, she squared her shoulders. “We don’t have to talk about lifestyle choices now. Not on your way out. Not unless it comes up again.” She clicked her tongue. “We can argue another time if we must. For now, let’s say good-bye, and leave it alone.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Nonsense.” Her expression, when she fixed her gaze on him, was filled with pride. “I don’t think you expected me to approve, and I don’t know if I do. Right now, I don’t want to send you off across the country angry.”

“I’m not.”

“Good. Neither am I.”

“So I’ll see you at Thanksgiving.”

She lifted one eyebrow. “You had better, young man.”

He grinned and his worry over whether or not she approved of him evaporated. “Yes, ma’am.”

The others joined them as they embraced, and Bob wished him well before escorting his mother out.

That left him with Malcolm and Charlie and a wall of good-bye he was reluctant to breach.

Charlie did the honours, grabbing him into a tight embrace, kissing him soundly and long, then turning and hurrying for the open air.

“He’s—”

“Yeah.” Alistair watched him go. “Take care of him.”

“You know we’ll take care of each other.”

Alistair nodded. His eyes stung and he turned his head away.

“And you don’t need anyone to look after you, Alistair. You know you don’t.”

“Of course not.”

“That’s what makes you the guy we needed for now.” He clenched his teeth, and then growled. “God, you are so...” He made another snarling sound and hugged Alistair tight.

There were more good-byes and good lucks, but all the important things had been said. Alistair was going. He wanted to go more than he wanted to stay, and he knew it was the right thing for all of them, because they needed someone who would stay.

“Thank you,” he whispered. “For everything.” Including letting him go.

In his heart, later, as he sat on the plane and watched his small town life fall away, he thanked them most of all for pushing him out the door and into his life.

**THE END**

## Author Bio

*Jaime has been writing for various publishers since the fall of 2008, although she's been writing for herself far longer. Often asked why men; what's so fascinating about writing stories about men falling in love, she's never come up with a clear answer. Just that these are the stories that she loves to read, so it seemed to make sense if she was going to write, they should also be the stories she wrote.*

*These days, you can find plenty of free reading on her website. She also writes for Freya's Bower, Pink Petal Books, MLR Press, Dreamspinner Press and Total E-Bound.*

*Spare time, when it can be found rolled into a ball at the back of the dryer or cavorting with the dust bunnies in the corners, she's probably spending reading, drawing, gardening (weather permitting, of course, since she is Canadian!) or watching movies. Well. She has a day job or two, as well, and two kids, but thankfully, also a wonderful husband who shoulders more than his fair share of household and child care responsibilities.*

*She graduated some time ago from college with a Fine Arts diploma, with a major in textile arts, which basically qualifies her to draw pictures and create things with string and fabric. One always needs an official slip of paper to fall back on after all...*

## Contact Info

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LiveJournal](#) | [Deviantart](#)

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