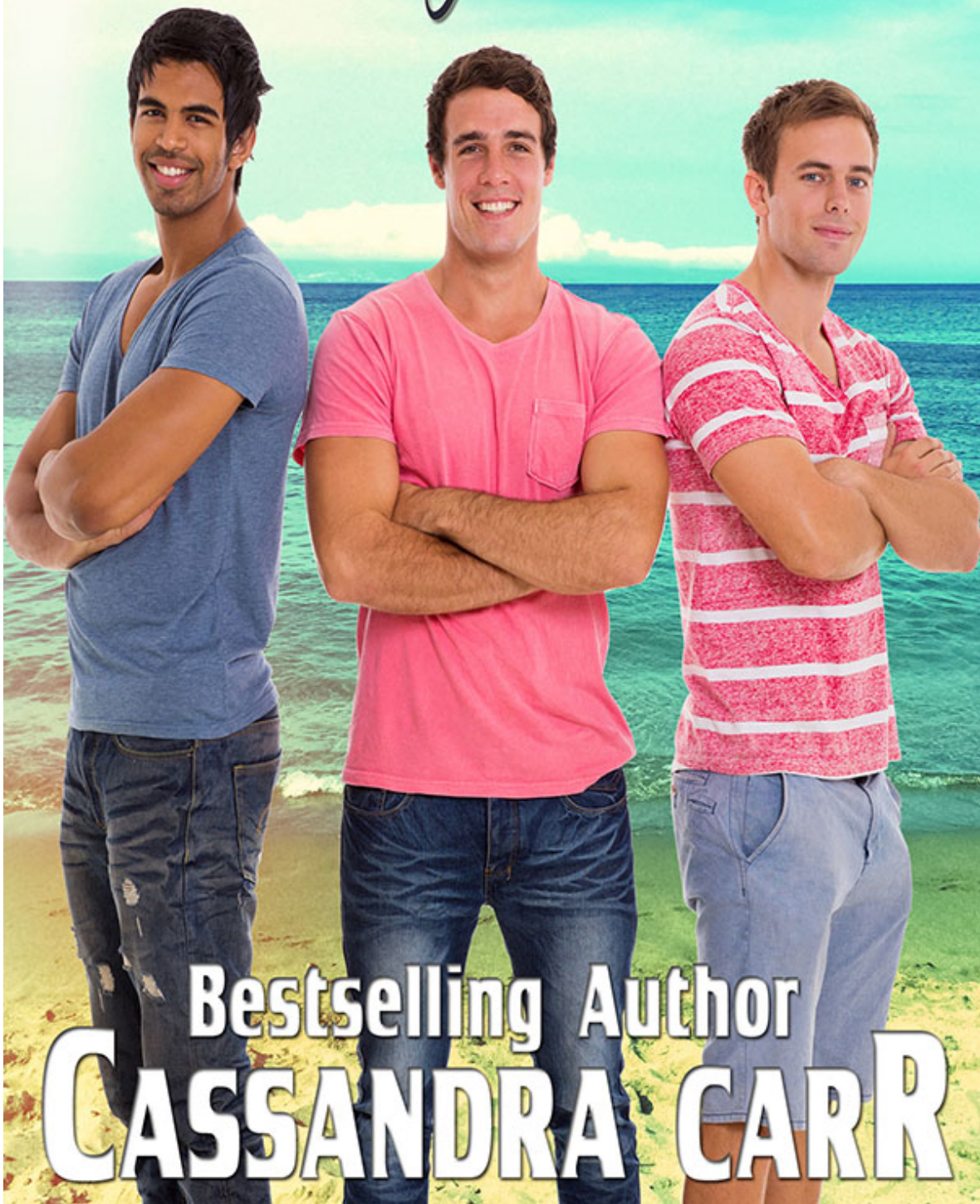


Binding Hearts



Bestselling Author
CASSANDRA CARR

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Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

BINDING HEARTS

By Cassandra Carr

Introduction

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

What Is Love is an Open Road?

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

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

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

Words of Caution

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

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

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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BINDING HEARTS

By Cassandra Carr

Photo Description

Three young men sitting on a cobblestone street with their arms around each other and melancholy expressions. The man in the middle is kissing the cheek of the man on the right, while the man on the left is resting his chin on his knee.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

All three of us met on a study abroad trip to Spain, and the sparks flew pretty much immediately. To say we were enamored with each other would be an understatement.

Spain is one of the most tolerant countries of homosexuality in the world, as are the other countries we had the opportunity to visit during our stay, including Portugal and France. That's not to say our threesome never got unwanted attention during our trip, but we were empowered by the freedom these countries offered us, and being so far from our "normal lives", afforded us a nonchalant attitude about any strange looks or off-handed comments.

But now, we are back home in the U.S. with our families and friends, and an even less accepting society for unconventional relationships. As our sexual infatuation has developed into real love, we want to stay together. However, we're each struggling with cultural reintegration in our own ways. Please tell me that we can make it work.

Sincerely,

Kelsey

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: college, poly mmm, switch/versatile, coming out, established relationship, homophobia, new adult

Word Count: 25,376

BINDING HEARTS

By Cassandra Carr

Chapter One

Joe

Get here NOW. I laughed when I read the text. Trevor had never been big on patience.

Take me away. Relieve my stress. ;-) Another text, this one from my other man, Brady, who'd never been big on subtlety.

But I adored them both.

I said goodbye to my parents and little brother, barely able to contain my excitement for what was to come. For the first time in a long, long time, I *wanted* to go back to school. Really, really psyched. I didn't hate school, but the lazy days of summer usually made me grumpy about packing everything up yet again and spending months in classes and doing homework. I'd spent most of this past summer with Trevor and Brady in Spain before we'd had to return to our hometowns in early August, where the days had seemed to go on forever.

I wanted to see my boys. My cock started to harden, and I shifted in the driver's seat of my new truck. My parents, owners of a car dealership, had given me the truck for my twenty-first birthday, which actually occurred while me, Trevor, and Brady were in Spain for a study abroad program. Totally different majors, but we all ended up in Palma, the largest city on a gorgeous island off the coast of Spain, pretty close to Barcelona.

Trev and Brady had made my birthday one I'd never forget. The two of them literally fucked me into unconsciousness. Just when I thought there was no way in hell I'd get hard again, Trev would lick down over my balls—he loved doing that and I loved letting him—while Brady deep-throated me. When we'd first started fooling around, Brady had only been able to take about half of me, even though I'm no sausage stud. That'd be Brady and his seven-and-a-half-inch dick. My mouth watered.

My phone rang through the Bluetooth connection on my stereo and I pressed a button on the steering wheel to answer it.

“Hey.”

“Hey yourself, big boy.”

Trevor. “I'm on my way. Should be there in about an hour and a half.”

“Can’t wait to see you.”

“Me neither. Who knew three weeks could be fucking endless?”

“Mmm, fucking.”

I snorted. “You’re a nympho.”

“And you love me for it.”

“That’s true.” And I did. Before we all left Spain, we’d all said those three magical words: “I love you”. We’d been together for about six months by then, and it had felt right, though even now I could hardly believe I’d found one guy to love, much less two. The relationship worked for us, despite its unconventionality. Now we were headed back to the University of Virginia, or UVB for short, where we’d requested and gotten a triple suite. The place would probably constantly smell like sex. Well, if I had anything to do with it.

“See ya soon, baby.”

I laughed and clicked off the phone. Trevor was a tiny thing, all five six and a hundred forty pounds of him, but he could give as good as he got. Brady was born here, though of Indian heritage, which lent him that dark mocha skin I loved to explore with my hands and mouth. He was nearly six four, though he’d been downright skinny before we’d started lifting weights together. On the other hand, the picture of a good ole American boy in the dictionary looked like a copycat of me: brown hair, brown eyes, five eleven. We all looked totally different, but when we were together, perfection.

I cranked up the tunes, playing the beat with my thumbs on the steering wheel. Good thing not a lot of cop cars were out or I probably would’ve gotten pulled over for doing eighty in a sixty-five mile an hour zone. But I *needed* to get to them—to Trev and Brady. I actually ached, and it was more than physical. So, so much more. I’d never been in love. Now I understood why the poets and writers called it exquisite torture.

I pulled onto Trevor’s street and spied him standing with his dad, his bags piled around him. He signaled me into the driveway, and I cut the engine. We’d decided not to tell our parents about us yet. There was no question the three of us were in love, but would it stand the test of time, of school? Bad enough being gay, but a gay threesome? We weren’t sure how we’d be taken, so keeping our parents in the dark for now seemed like the best solution.

Stepping out of the truck, I played it cool.

“Hey, man.” Trev and I exchanged the typical guy-hug, and then I pulled back and held out my hand. “Nice to see you again, Mr. Albert.”

“You, too.” He turned to Trevor and handed him a few bills. “It’s all I’ve got. Sorry it’s not more.”

“That’s okay, Dad. You and Mom work hard.”

“Yeah, well, you work hard, too, so you won’t have to live the life we did.”

As he was talking, I grabbed two of Trev’s bags and heaved them into the bed of the truck. Trevor was self-conscious about his family’s financial status. UVB had awarded him a partial scholarship, and student loans were covering the rest. For the study abroad program, he’d really had to go into hock, but we all hoped it would be worth it in the end.

Trevor put his other bags in the back with mine, and we waved to his dad. Soon we were on the road. We drove a few blocks, and Trev said, “Make a right here.” It looked to be an abandoned warehouse or something and I frowned. “Pull around the back.” I did, starting to get a clue, and as soon as I’d gotten the truck into park, Trev started climbing over the bucket seat to straddle me. “I need you.”

Our tongues twisted together as we ate at each other’s mouths, and when Trev brought our crotches, and thus our erections, together, both of us groaned. I tore my mouth away, pulling oxygen into my lungs. “I want to fuck you. Right here, right now.”

He rubbed against me once more and said, “Sounds good to me.”

“But we can’t. We promised Brady we’d wait until we got to school. No way could we maneuver three of us in this truck cab.”

Trev’s face broke out into one of his mischievous smiles, and he said, “Maybe I’ll just get you ready while you drive.”

“No blowing me on the highway. You know I can’t concentrate on a thing when you suck me, and I don’t wanna die with my dick in your mouth. That’d be pretty embarrassing.”

“Fine.” Trevor moved back to his side of the cab, and I drew in an unsteady breath.

“I love you.”

He looked over at me, and his light blue eyes turned darker. “I love you too. Let’s go get our man.”

A few hours later we were at school. Fortunately, the suites had a small parking lot right behind them so we wouldn't have to haul all our shit from the regular student drop-off.

Brady, being Brady, had drawn up a plan for where everything in the room should go. Neither Trev nor I had been surprised when he'd told us his major was Economics. I laughed when I saw it. "You actually used Photoshop to do this? Dude, how bored *were* you?"

"Majorly. My mom and dad were both working a lot. Big shocker there. My sister was either in summer school to keep up with her courses or at the tennis courts with her coach. He thinks she can go pro in a year or so if she keeps improving."

"That's cool. So what does all this mean?"

"I got a longer bed because of my height, so I figured we could put mine in the middle since it'd be jammed in anywhere else. You guys can put yours on either side and we'll have a nice, big, bed. Notice I didn't say comfy." We all looked at the bare mattresses and sighed. He pointed to the diagram. "These are our desks."

"Brady, do we really need to do all this now?" Trevor asked. His tone bordered on whiny, and Brady and I shared a quick smile. Both of us were healthy college-aged guys and loved to fuck, but Trevor would be happy spending all his time in bed. Not that either of us really minded.

"Let's get the beds put together, including sheets."

"Why? They'll just get dirty."

Brady's nose wrinkled. "Eww, man, that's gross. I am not leaving wet spots all over these mattresses."

Trevor grinned. "Wouldn't be like they've never had cum all over them before."

"Seriously, quit it." Brady slapped Trevor on the ass, and in return Trevor gave him a saucy look and stuck his ass out.

"You know I like that."

I put up my hands. "Let's just get the mattress pads and sheets on the beds."

"Excellent idea." Brady searched through a box. "I bought three sets for each of us, figured we could do laundry easier now that it's only a floor down

and there are way less people in this building than the regular dorms.” When Brady had announced he planned a trip to a home goods store to shop for stuff for the room, Trevor and I hadn’t argued. We both hated shopping. Plus, Brady knew about Trevor’s limited funds, and with two doctors as parents, money had never been a problem for him.

We got to work and soon had the beds made. Trevor immediately collapsed onto them. The spacing was almost perfect. There was only about an inch on each side of my bed and Trevor’s, so it looked like one huge bed. Brady had gotten two queen-sized comforters to put over the whole thing, since Trevor stole the covers, but with temperatures still in the high-80s, we wouldn’t need those for a while.

Brady picked up his diagram. “Our desks can face each other in a closed U shape.” He demonstrated with his hands as if we didn’t know what he was talking about, and we pushed them together. “All the dressers will stay on that side where they are now,” he said, pointing across the room. “I’ll take the closet behind the desks, you guys can take the ones that are on the same side as your bed.”

I grinned. “Are you sure you shouldn’t change your major to architecture?”

“I’m sure.” He pointed to the expanse of bed. “Both of you, naked, now.” He reached back to lock the door without ever taking his gaze off us as we divested ourselves of what limited clothing we had.

Trevor jerked his head toward Brady. “What about you?”

Brady, now that he’d gotten more comfortable with us, had also discovered a dominant streak in bed and loved bossing us around. Trev tended to do whatever we wanted, with enthusiasm, and I just went with it. Why wouldn’t I? Everything we did felt great.

“I want Joe to fuck you while you suck my cock.” He ran his hand over Trevor’s face. “I’ve missed being in your mouth.” Leaning forward, he kissed Trevor, climbing on top, still fully clothed. Trevor’s legs went around Brady’s waist, and I used that position to perfect advantage as I got Trevor ready for me. Brady must’ve caught on since Trevor had begun moaning with the first touch of my finger to his hole, because he chuckled. “Better shut you up.” He moved up Trevor’s body and unzipped his shorts. Trevor licked his lips. “That’s what you want, isn’t it?”

“Fuck, yes.” He wiggled as I slid a second finger in.

“Are you our little cock slut?”

“Yes, yes, please, Brady, don’t tease me. I practically broke my hand jerking off while we were away from each other.”

Brady slowly fed Trevor his dick, and after shoving on a condom and lubing it like I was a contestant in a Guinness Book of World Records contest for fastest condom acquisition, I pushed Trev’s legs back and Brady grabbed his knees, opening Trev up more for me. I wanted to just dive into that hot, tight hole I’d been dreaming about, but I forced myself to go slow. If he started whining and moving around, I’d know he was ready for more.

My cockhead breached his ring of muscle, and Trevor groaned. I couldn’t tell if that was a good groan or a bad groan, so I leaned over to look around Brady. “You okay, baby?”

Trevor nodded as best he could with his lips wrapped around Brady’s cock as the other man slid in and out, grabbing the wall to get a different angle and letting out a curse when Trevor adjusted. I smiled and leaned back again. Inch by inch, I gave Trevor what he wanted... what I wanted... what we all wanted. What we needed. Some might say we engaged in orgies, but the term completely diminished what we had. If these guys would let me, I’d stay with them forever. There wasn’t a doubt in my mind about that, society be damned. But both of them were a little more image-conscious than me and wanted to see how people would react to the idea of all three of us being together.

Being in my man’s ass again drove me to the brink of my control far too fast. But since from his increasingly jerky movements it appeared Brady was about to lose it, I didn’t fight my orgasm. Slamming into Trev one last time, I threw my head back, gritting my teeth so hard they hurt, and let out a sound probably only dogs could hear. When I came to, Brady’s forehead rested on the wall in front of him, and his chest heaved. White liquid dotted Trevor’s stomach, and I momentarily flinched. Obviously he hadn’t needed my help to come, but I should’ve been less selfish. I’d have to work on that in the coming weeks.

Slowly, I pulled out of Trevor and grabbed a tissue. At least someone had remembered the essentials—condoms, lube, and something to clean up with. Most likely Brady’s doing.

“I’m starving, but I do *not* want to get up,” Trevor declared. I took a handful of tissues and began wiping his belly. That was the least I could do. Too bad we didn’t have our own bathroom. Showers could’ve been so much more fun.

“Hate to tell you this, baby, but the dining hall doesn’t deliver.” Brady climbed off him and then reached out a hand to help him sit.

Trevor scrubbed his hands over his face, mumbling, “Stupid policy.”

“So, um, before we go for food,” I started, my stomach tightening, “we need to make a final ruling about how public we want to be. In Spain we were still going back and forth, and we were too busy having phone sex since we got back that a decision never got made.”

Brady sighed as he sat on the bed next to me. “I’d love to be out, to kiss both of you whenever I want, have my arm around you, but I don’t think it’s a good idea. It sucks. At least we have our suite.”

“I know a gay threesome would definitely raise some eyebrows. I wonder if we’re underestimating the student body, though? There are gays here who hold leadership positions, like that guy on the board of the Student Body Association. He seems to get through everything fine.”

Trev snorted. “The fact his family practically built this place no doubt made everybody look past any perceived faults the guy might have.”

“Could be, but I prefer to think people our age are more accepting.”

“In Europe, maybe,” Trevor argued. “But not here. Much as I hate to say it, Brady’s right.”

“Okay, how about this? We’ll play it cool for now and assess the atmosphere. If things seem copasetic we can talk about the issue again. Is that fair? I don’t want to give up on this.” I rubbed the back of my neck with my hand. I didn’t know if it was the sex or the conversation or both, but my neck muscles had seized up and I could feel a headache coming on.

“I think that’s reasonable,” Brady answered. He rose and began sorting out clothes.

Trevor and I watched him for a moment. I didn’t want to say anything further until Trevor did.

“I’m smaller than you guys, don’t forget that.” Trevor’s voice barely carried. “I’ll admit I’m a little scared of being jumped.”

“If homophobic assholes want to get you, they will, no matter what size you are,” Brady told him, rising and then tossing piles at each of us. “Watch your back, try to stay away from dark places when you’re alone; all that shit. It’s the best we can do.”

We all got dressed and headed for the dining hall, keeping space between us. I hated this. The two men with me were it; I was done. I'd never even considered I'd find my forever loves while I was still in college, and undergrad no less, but I had, and I didn't want to hide it. None of us should've had to.

I sighed. Neither of my men was comfortable with PDAs, and of course I'd respect that, but watching all the couples walking by, swaying as they sucked face, left a burning hole in my gut.

Chapter Two

Brady

I knew Joe wasn't satisfied with our decision, but really, though many college campuses had come a long way in accepting LGBT students, including UVB, I had no desire to be the poster child for gay rights. Hell, my parents didn't even know about my sexuality. Trev had come out as soon as we'd gotten home, and his family had taken it really well, telling him they'd strongly suspected it and that as long as he was happy they were too. His mom showed more support than his dad, a typical blue-collar worker who'd grown up with conservative morals and standards, but he hadn't said anything negative out loud to Trevor as far as I knew.

Joe had been out since he graduated from high school, though he maintained a low profile. I didn't think any of the three of us "looked" gay, whatever that meant. Some would probably label Trevor a twink, but in my limited knowledge, twinks had blond hair and blue eyes. Most likely not all of them, though no one had ever explained the term to me. Joe was built solidly, having played soccer in high school, and though I'd been skinny until the past couple of months, my height probably intimidated some people.

"What's that grin for?" Trevor asked, poking Joe in the side.

"Oh, nothing. Just... reminiscing."

I didn't know if Joe meant about what we'd just done or all the times we'd tangled the sheets in Spain, but either way, those thoughts would take them down a potentially slippery slope. "Leave it, man." My tone must've been rougher than I'd meant, since the smile dropped off both men's faces and Joe dug his hands into the pockets of his cargo shorts. "Look, I don't mean to be an ass, but we're at school now; we're in public."

"I know. This whole situation blows."

Trevor spoke up. "Do either of you know what time the registrar's office opens tomorrow? I didn't get one of the electives I still need and forgive me if I have trouble believing a course called 'Science, Technology, and the Environment' would be all filled up."

His obvious attempt to change the subject worked. Joe answered, "Nine o'clock, I think. And I know you like that stuff, but it sounds boring as shit. I don't know how a class with that name could *ever* get closed."

Shrugging, Trevor answered, “To-may-to, to-mah-to. Personally, I prefer to-mah-to. Sounds more refined.”

I chuckled. “And European.”

We managed to get through dinner and said hello to a few friends before begging off a bowling party with the excuse we hadn’t unpacked yet. Not a lie, but the task would take a half-hour, at most. Toss clothes in the dresser, put school supplies in the desk drawers, and you could pretty much call it done. But Joe hated bowling, so the excuse worked perfectly and no one was the wiser.

A few days later, Joe and I had just finished a run in the late afternoon. The sun blazed down on us, but unless we rose at the crack of dawn, no other block of time was available to both of us. Joe had decided to call it quits, but I wanted to keep going, so I looked around and then grabbed the back of Joe’s head, his sweaty hair slipping through my fingertips. The kiss only lasted a few seconds, and I took off right afterward, my heart lighter than it had been earlier when some steroid-raging dude had called his teammate—they were both in UVB football jerseys—a fag as they passed me in the hall. Now *that* had been a major buzzkill.

My blood boiled. That kind of casual homophobia, in my opinion, did far more harm to LGBT students than anything else. How could it be acceptable to call someone a fag, but not a nigger, for instance? I had never gotten it. But I’d forced myself to just keep walking. Always keep walking.

Trevor had lifted weights right beside Joe and me, but his body didn’t show it, and I worried someday Trevor would be caught in a situation he couldn’t handle. He was a grown man, though, and needed to learn how to protect himself if Joe or I wasn’t around. Even then, the odds were often stacked against us, since inevitably there would be five or six drunk homophobic assholes to the three of us.

I shook my head. Right now I needed to concentrate on getting back into the swing of things with my classes. In Spain, I’d done a project comparing Spain’s conversion to the Euro with that of three other countries to assess which countries had benefitted and which had not. Of the three of us, I’d had the least regular schedule and found it suited me. But college classes waited for no man, so I slipped into the lecture hall for my Economics of Developing Countries class a few minutes early and found a seat about two-thirds of the way back.

“Hey, man. Long time no see,” my friend Robbie called from a few rows over. “How was Spain? Topless beaches, sun, fun, must’ve been a blast.”

I smiled and played the part. “Many of those things were present, but I also somehow managed to do research on and complete a lengthy paper on the conversion of the Euro by different countries and how it affected them.”

Robbie laughed. “I doubt that subject matter would’ve kept me from checking out the local scenery.”

A mutual friend, Victoria, slapped him upside the head, nearly dislodging his backward baseball cap. “Women are more than scenery, you jackass.”

“What? I meant the architecture, the historical spots...”

“Sure you did.”

The professor strode in, and I groaned internally. I’d forgotten this guy would be teaching the course. My GPA had always been high—my parents expected it—but I could never wrap my brain around the nonsensical examples this particular professor used to illustrate different theories. I’d had the same guy in freshman microeconomics and still hadn’t figured out what pizzas and camels had to do with each other.

As the class slogged along, I took notes on my laptop, but soon got bored and started playing with my phone, smiling as more and more crazy pictures of the three of us scrolled by in my album. We should have time for a quickie before dinner if Joe got out of his lab on time. Just the thought of it made my cock begin to harden, and I attempted to subtly adjust myself so walking wouldn’t be a form of distress.

I got back to the room, finding Trevor already there, playing with some sort of funny instrument and what looked like a pile of dirt in a beaker.

“Hi, babe,” Trev said, turning his face up. I gave him what he wanted and more, pushing Trevor back in his chair as I plundered the man’s mouth. “Whoa. Got a little aggression to work out or something?”

“Or something.” I grinned and Trevor rolled his eyes.

I unpacked my bag onto the top of my desk while Trevor went back to whatever the hell he’d been doing. I had homework, but no energy or enthusiasm for it; so instead, I climbed onto our makeshift bed and lay back with a sigh.

“Hey, before you fall asleep over there, I wanna run something by you.” Lifting my head, I signalled for him to go on, and Trevor did, his words coming out in a rush. “There’s a meeting of the Gay-Straight Alliance tonight. I know Joe’s gone to some of their meetings, so he’d know people, and now that I’m out, well, sort of, anyway, I wanted to check it out. Joe will probably come with me if you don’t want to and I’d totally understand, but I think it might do you some good to see how many of us there actually are out there.”

He’d turned in his chair as he’d spoken, and now Trevor stared at the floor, refusing to make eye contact with me. Biting my lip, I then let out a slow, silent sigh. I had to face all this eventually if I was going to live the life I wanted to, but how could I be sure that time had come? On the other hand, I felt like I owed it to Trevor and Joe to at least make an effort.

“Tell you what.”

Trevor looked up, his eyes already twinkling. “Yeah?”

“Leave that dirt and come over here. If I can get in a good, hard orgasm before dinner, I’ll go.”

“Like I could refuse an offer from you...” Trevor stood and walked to the edge of the bed. “Want me to suck you?”

“No, I want a sixty-nine.”

“Really?” Trev’s eyebrows shot up.

“I don’t always need to be in charge, you know. Now get those shorts off and bring me that cock I’ve been dreaming about. Well, I guess that sounded in-charge-y, huh?”

“I like it. I think it’s sexy.”

“I know you do.”

Trevor undressed so quickly I feared he might fall on his ass, but he managed, and then divested me of my clothes. We maneuvered into position, which would’ve been easier had our heights been more similar, but when a man wanted his dick sucked he’d do just about anything to make that happen, and I did.

I groaned as the slightly salty, smooth shaft of Trevor’s cock pushed into my mouth. Soon we were going at each other with zeal, so much so we didn’t even notice Joe arrive. I saw movement out of the corner of my eye, and Joe licked his lips.

I took Trevor's dick out long enough to say, "Wanna get in on the action?"

"Hell, yeah, but you guys just stay right where you are." The *snick* of the lube opening had me wondering if Joe would fuck one of us. I had found I preferred to top, though bottoming had its advantages too. Trevor relished getting his ass pounded, and Joe would do either, so it worked out well.

I concentrated on Trevor once more, pulling him back inside and sucking on the hard head, running my tongue around it. Trev's dick bounced in my mouth, and I looked up in time to see what looked like Joe's fingers in Trev's ass. Yeah, that would do it. Then Joe reached over Trevor and one slick finger played with my pucker. I moaned to show Joe I was okay with it and soon two of Joe's fingers pumped in and out of my ass. Joe worked us both over until I shot into Trevor's mouth and Trevor's own orgasm then spilled into my mouth and I swallowed, taking everything.

Trevor glanced at me, a teasing smile on his face. We must've both been thinking the same thing, because we attacked Joe simultaneously and soon our man was as naked as we were. I bent Joe's legs and pushed them wide before we went to town on Joe's thick dick, already leaking pre-cum all over. Trevor moved down to Joe's balls, and I chuckled as Joe's breath caught.

"So fucking good." It didn't take long to bring Joe to orgasm. Trevor and I both took some of his essence. Joe collapsed on the bed. "Welcome home to *me*. Best way I know how to show someone you missed them."

I laughed, but then got serious. I didn't want to forget about what Trev and I had discussed, and then have Trev feel too self-conscious to say anything about it himself since I hadn't. I owed these guys everything. Meeting them changed my life, and I planned to hold on tight. If that meant doing some things that made me uncomfortable, I'd deal with it. "Trev wants to go to a meeting of the Gay-Straight Alliance. What are your thoughts?"

"I'm game, but they already know me. It'd be you two coming out to them, so to speak. You ready for that?" He addressed the last question at me, and I let out a loud breath.

"Yeah. I don't want to hide forever, and what better place to start being who I really am than with people who are either just like me or at least support my right to love who I want?"

"I couldn't have said it better myself," Joe told me, grabbing my face and plunging his tongue into my mouth. He pulled away and said, "Let's go have dinner and then get ourselves some support."

The meeting went better than I had expected. I couldn't even articulate what I thought might happen, mostly that the straight supporters would be goth or hipster types. Stereotypical, I know, and not true at all. The captain of the baseball team walked in and sat on the "straight" side—they'd segregated us so it would be easier to tell the sexuality of each person, and I was actually fine with that. After he kicked back, a couple more guys came in, also sitting on the straight side. Their track jackets said they were members of UVB's soccer team.

Joe will be happy about that.

A girl arrived next, and it took me a moment to recognize her. When I did, heat flooded my face. Back when I'd been "playing at" straight, before meeting Joe and Trevor, I'd gone to a bunch of house parties at frats and sororities. At one of them, I'd picked this girl up and we'd fooled around upstairs for a while before I begged off. I didn't want her to notice no matter what she did, I couldn't get hard.

Guess that ship has sailed if she remembers that night.

A somewhat older guy, probably early thirties, stood, and the room quieted. "I'm Professor Stewart, the faculty advisor for the Gay-Straight Alliance. I'm also an out and proud gay man. My husband, Shawn, is sitting right there in the first row." Shawn gave a little wave. Man, both of these guys were hot. I wondered if I'd look that comfortable and self-assured in ten years. "We got married in New York a couple of years ago, and we were thrilled when Virginia passed its own Equality in Marriages Act. Anyway, I'm just here to listen, to facilitate as needed, that kind of thing. This club isn't about me; it's about all of you, and what we can do together to make UVB a more tolerant atmosphere."

Several people spoke, relating stories and ideas of all types. I listened intently, hoping for some sort of sign that we could do this.

Joe leaned over. "Do you mind if I tell our story?"

I cleared my throat. "As long as I don't have to say anything." My voice cracked as I spoke, and Joe gave me a tender smile.

"I love you." Then he stood. Apparently he'd already gotten Trevor's okay while I'd been absorbed—no way would Joe do this without it. "My name is Joe, and I," his hand swept over all three of us, "we have a unique story. We came here tonight because frankly, we're afraid if we go public much more than we are right now, we're going to have a problem." He shifted his weight

from foot to foot. “The three of us met on a study abroad program that ran from January to early August of this year. At first, we were just having a little fun, blowing off steam in a foreign land, but as time went on, we realized something. The three of us—all three of us—were in love with each other. That was mostly all right while we remained in Europe, but here? Not so much. We’re open to any suggestions you all have. Thanks.”

The baseball captain stood for the first time. “I’m straight, but my cousin is gay and falling in love for the first time. It’s actually been really cool to watch. I’ve always supported people’s rights to love whoever they wanted, but when I saw him with his boyfriend over the summer, something clicked inside me. I had to do more than just be okay with it. I needed to vocally speak out about homophobia. So I’m not sure I have any suggestions, but good on you guys. Most people can’t find one person to love, and you all found each other. If there’s anything I can do, or if I see someone harassing you, I will step in. You can count on that. I’m not the biggest guy, but I’ll do what I can to level the playing field.”

Joe had sat down, but he nodded to the kid. “Thank you, we appreciate that.”

One of the other straight students, a tall, skinny redhead, cleared his throat. “Can I ask how demonstrative you are in public?”

“Here? Not very much. Our gut tells us that’s when a problem would start.”

“Sadly, you’re probably right. It makes me so mad that in this day and age y’all still have to put up with this kind of bullshit. Sorry for swearing,” he added toward the advisor, who waved him off. “I’m a nobody at this school, so I’m not sure I’d ever be any help to you, but I figured the more of us who showed our support, the better.”

The meeting wrapped up soon after that, and as we gathered our stuff, the soccer players weaved between the seats and approached us. “Hey, I’m Colin.” He jerked his head toward Joe. “I’ve seen you kicking a ball around. Why haven’t you tried out for the team?”

A sad smile took over Joe’s face. “I destroyed my ankle when a defender landed on it while it was already turned.” All four of them winced, and Joe chuckled, a bitter edge to the sound. “Yeah, I’ve got enough machinery in there to set off the alarm at the airport.”

“That sucks, man,” Colin answered. “Anyway, we don’t want to keep you. If you’re interested in playing a pick-up game, nothing serious, we’re around.”

And like some of the others said, if we see something happening, we'll step in. A good, hard kick to the ass of some drunken frat boy might go a little way toward taking care of the problem."

"Just be careful you don't get yourselves in trouble for questionable off-field conduct," Joe warned.

"We won't. Our coach is supportive of LGBT athletes too. He and some others in the Athletic Department are trying to convince the athletic director to shoot a spot for the You Can Play Project. So far, he's been hesitant," Colin continued. "I don't think it's because he's a homophobe, but you know how it is with Division I schools. They're always competing for quality players, and I guess he's worried some athletes might pass up UVB if we're vocal on being pro-LGBT."

I spoke up for the first time. "I can understand his situation. He's between a rock and a hard place. I'm an econ major, so I totally get why he wouldn't want to jeopardize the college's chances of landing the very best. That makes his decision, if, in fact, that's what's going on, sound mercenary, but those positions are fraught with political tension and maneuvering." Looking down at my scuffed sneakers, I added, "I'm also the only one of us who's not 'out', so I get the fear aspect too."

"You'll come out when you're ready," Joe assured me for about the thousandth time. "And when you do, we'll be there for you."

Colin stuck out a hand to Joe. "Great meeting you guys. And don't forget what I said. Wear an ankle brace and come knock around a few balls." He laughed. "Why does that sound dirty?"

We all exchanged handshakes and then those guys left. Now the three of us were the only remaining people in the room. Joe turned to me. "You okay? You look a little green."

"I'm all right. Just—being here, sitting and listening to all these stories, everything became so real. While we were in Europe, our lives felt like a fairy tale. But *this*, this right here, is my life. Our lives."

I had a permit to carry a concealed weapon, and that permit transferred to Virginia. Maybe it was time to look into carrying. Neither of the guys knew I owned a handgun. After some third cousin five times removed or whatever had been beaten up just because he was Indian, my dad had insisted I learn to shoot and had gotten me a small Sig Sauer. I didn't even have it with me, but the drive home to get it would only take an afternoon.

Of course, that would mean admitting to Joe, at the very least since he was one with the wheels, why I needed to go back to my house. I wasn't sure I was ready for that, and I definitely didn't think either Joe or Trevor would be cool with it. Probably more like totally freaked out. But I knew what I was doing, and at least this way I could protect myself and hopefully both of them. The goal was always to not have to discharge your weapon, but if someone threatened the lives of these two men I loved, I'd pull that trigger without a second thought.

"Let's go home," I said. "I have homework."

"Me, too. Gotta check my experiment," Trevor answered.

Joe and I made a face at each other. Trevor's "experiments" littered the room with an array of beakers, petri dishes, and test tubes. We'd asked him if it was okay to have the samples out in such an unsanitary environment, but Trevor had only shrugged and assured us none were volatile or temperature-dependent. There went our primary argument.

Joe spoke as we headed for the door. "I need to make up some lesson plans. You wouldn't believe how difficult it is to figure out how much to put in each one. They're designed for a forty-minute class, but when I used one yesterday in that daycare, they'd all finished the art project I'd brought in record time and I had to scramble for something else for the little buggers to do. I'd figured doing watercolors of pictures with words would take them a while. Nope. Ten minutes. Done. Next."

Sometimes I thought Joe had the hardest major out of all of us. "You'll work it out, bud," I said. "You always do." One of the things I loved most about Joe was his unflagging optimism. It nicely balanced my natural pessimism. Hiking my backpack further up, I began the walk back to our suite building situated on the edge of the campus, hardly able to contain my excitement about the mere thought of snuggling with my men. Sex would be great, but we were all beat, and though I would've said someone was blowing smoke up my ass a year ago, now I believed cuddling really was cool. I never felt safer or more "me" than when Trev and Joe wrapped their arms around me and each other.

Chapter Three

Trevor

“Fucking shit!” My voice echoed through the lab room and I cringed. The TA for this course wasn’t known for his sense of humor, but he’d have to deal. One of my contacts had just fallen out of my eye after I rubbed it and, even if I found it, no way could I put it back in here. A bathroom would’ve been okay in a pinch, but I had no saline. Water didn’t exactly make them ready for wear either.

Carefully kneeling, I closed my now bad eye and searched for the stupid contact with the other one. It seemed like it would’ve fallen all the way to the floor based on where I’d been standing. I checked my clothes and shoes just to make sure, but nothing. I couldn’t afford to buy more contacts. My student loans were already through the roof, and the crappy insurance my parents had didn’t cover “vanity items” like contacts.

I noticed the TA’s shoes approach and stop next to me.

“I lost a contact. I’m looking for it, but so far, nothing. I can’t wear only one contact and expect to have any kind of capability for this analysis.” I probably sounded like I was making excuses, but keeping one eye closed would be a surefire recipe for nausea. If I couldn’t find the contact, I’d have to book back to the suite and get my only pair of glasses. At this point they were two or three prescriptions behind and made me look like the hugest nerd on the planet.

The TA tutted, but moved away. *Thank God.*

“Can I help?”

I looked up. *Amber? Ashley?* I was shit at remembering girls’ names, especially considering I’d never had a reason to recall them.

“Um, sure. One of my contacts fell out of my eye and with only one good eye left it’s pretty difficult to search for it. It’s been bugging me all day.”

“No problem.” She knelt and began to search. I kept trying, but got dizzy and had to stop again. What a way to make a guy feel like a total loser. “Ha! I’ve got it.” She held the contact on the end of her finger and said, “But it’s ripped. You can’t put this back in. Your eye will get infected and it’ll bug the hell out of you, too. Trust me, I know. Been there, done that.”

“I don’t suppose you have any saline, so I can just get through this lab?”

“I think so.” She moved back to her station and pulled out a small bottle. “Here you go. Good luck.”

I didn’t bother to acknowledge the TA as I tore out of the lab. In the bathroom, I ran water over both sides of the lens, trying to dislodge any dirt or other muck from it. Soap wasn’t an option. I’d tried that once and my entire eye had swelled. This time, I needed to do the best I could, haul ass back to the lab, finish the analysis, and go back to the room for my glasses, no doubt making me late for my next class.

My stomach twisted. Where would I get the money to buy another contact? I knew I could ask Brady or even Joe for it, but I freaking hated feeling like a charity case. I’d done enough of that in Europe. The only alternative was wearing my glasses, though, and they weren’t a good choice since the prescription was so old. With my luck, headaches would abound.

I sighed and then attempted to put the contact back in. It went, but either the tear or the crap on it or a combination of both was making my eye wig out. Tears poured from it as I blinked over and over, trying in vain to find a comfortable enough spot to finish the lab.

After a few more precious minutes ticked by, I decided I would just have to deal with the leaky eye. This assignment needed to be completed today or tomorrow, and tomorrow was already jammed with other things. One part of being an ecological sciences major that completely blew was the number of labs that went with classes. I felt like I was taking a double course load all the time.

I was able to get the stupid thing done, although I knew damn well it wasn’t anywhere close to my best work. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and thumbed out a message to Brady and Joe that I’d ripped my contact and needed my glasses.

Brady answered first.

Where are they? I assume they’re the only pair of glasses you have? What about another pair of contacts?

I sighed.

Don’t have spares. My insurance is terrible and I had to pay retail price for this pair.

Plopping myself and my heavy backpack on the side of a planter, I took a breath. This would be okay. Somehow.

Yeah, only pair. Black. Top drawer of my dresser. I'm right in front of the Natural Sciences building. Oh, and bring me a contact case and saline, please. I need to preserve my one functioning lens.

I closed my eyes and then opened them again, pulling out the destroyed lens and chucking it into a nearby garbage bin. No reason to make my eye worse than it already was. The nausea had died down, but I still felt dizzy and I knew by the end of the day I'd be fighting a serious headache.

Be there in ten. I'll run.

Smiling, I thought about Brady running. The image of those tight ass cheeks tightening and moving could keep me happy for hours, no matter what other shit I had to deal with. My phone buzzed.

You guys got this? I'm in a lecture.

Whoops. Hopefully he'd turned his phone off. Of course, how would he have known I'd sent him a message?

All set, thx.

A few moments later Brady sprinted up to me. He hadn't been kidding, his chest heaving as he tried to pull oxygen into his lungs. I took the case first and quickly removed the other contact.

"You're my hero. You know that, right?" I put on the glasses and made a face. "These are gonna suck, but they're all I have until I can afford another lens."

"I've always wanted to be somebody's hero," he said with a grin. "What'll it get me?"

"Anything you want. If I can find you. These glasses are old and my prescription's changed."

"Hmm. I've never had glasses, but that doesn't sound good. On that note, I've got my Socialist Economies class starting soon. Oh, joy."

"Sounds like a barrel of laughs. Thanks again for these." I wanted to kiss him, and though the area certainly didn't teem with people, I figured too many were around for Brady to feel comfortable, so I didn't. Instead, I rose and picked up my backpack. "Remember, anything you want."

Environmental Ethics was my next class, and even though I walked in nearly fifteen minutes late, the professor didn't bat an eyelash. She liked me, which would hopefully help today. No way existed to quietly sneak into a small classroom with about fifteen students.

I took out my laptop and spent the next hour squinting. Awesome. By the time I got back to the dorm at the end of the day, my head pounded and I feared I might get violent if anything else went wrong.

Joe turned from his desk and immediately rose. "Oh, hon, your eye. It's all red."

"Yeah, and these stupid things aren't helping." I would've tossed the glasses on my own desk, but since they were the only available means of any vision correction, I forced myself to put them down gently. "I have a headache, I'm hungry, and I'm cranky. I'll understand if you guys bug out tonight. I'm not exactly gonna be good company. I need about ten ibuprofen, a massage, and oh, throw in a new set of eyes." I sat on the edge of the beds and then kicked off my sneakers.

"No way, babe. You're stuck with us." Joe handed me two small orange pills. "Ibuprofen. Two, for now." After grabbing one of the bottles of water from our communal fridge in the lounge, he twisted that open and handed it over.

"Thanks, but seriously, I've got work to do and I know you guys do too."

"Yeah, about that..."

I narrowed my fuzzy eyes in his general direction. "About what?"

"Brady called a little while ago. He'll be home soon, then we're going to the mall to get you more contacts." Before I could even say anything, Joe held up a hand. "I know you don't like feeling indebted to us, and if we were talking about a pair of jeans, we wouldn't worry about it. But dammit, Trev, these are your eyes. I'm begging you; let Brady do this. Otherwise both of us will have to put up with how he gets when he's worried, and if you recall, no one wants that."

I'd been stung by a jellyfish while in Europe, and you would've thought one of my legs had been blasted off for the way Brady treated me. After a while I threatened to never blow him again if he didn't leave me the fuck alone, and that threat finally got him off my back.

Biting my lip, I contemplated. I could ask for a few hundred more dollars on my loan. The amount already sounded laughable, so what would it hurt? But I knew if I did that Brady would be hurt.

“Okay.”

“Excellent!” Joe gave me a quick hug. “Now put those ugly-ass glasses on. Food first.”

Brady came in while Joe was talking and said, “Who’s got an ugly ass? Our boy Trevor here? Cuz I beg to differ. I pounded it yesterday morning and it looked pretty fine to me.”

“The things you boys get into when I’m not around...”

A couple of the other guys from our suite walked by, and Brady cursed under his breath. He’d left the door open, and in all likelihood, those guys had heard exactly what he’d said. The way I looked at it, the guys in the other three rooms, two doubles and one more triple like ours, had to be morons if they hadn’t figured out what went on in this room. We all tried to be quiet, but great sex made that an impossible feat. I’d never mentioned that to Brady, though. Skittish would be an understatement of how he acted day-to-day when we were together.

“Let’s just go,” Joe suggested, tugging me toward the door. “I’m feeling like pizza or something else greasy from the food court. I’m sick of dining hall food.”

“Works for me,” Brady answered, and I silently nodded, knowing one of them would buy my meal. Someday I’d pay them back for everything they’d done for me, but that day would not come anytime soon, unfortunately.

We ate and then went to the eyeglasses place. They told me they’d have the lens ready in an hour, so we decided to walk around. After a while that got boring and we started playfully pushing and shoving each other. We were careful not to hit anyone else, but at one point Joe propelled me into one of those little alcoves you see in malls for employees to use. He went for the jugular, or at least my version of it, my waist, tickling relentlessly.

I laughed so hard I couldn’t breathe, and finally dug an elbow into his side. Brady seized me and pinned my hands above my head, pressing his body into mine as he nipped at my ear. Joe went after the other, and soon I had to fight to contain the moans working their way up from my chest. Brady’s hand crept underneath my shirt and tweaked both nipples. I bit my lip hard.

We'd been in the alcove no more than maybe thirty seconds, back in the shadows, but the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. Someone was watching us. I pulled my head forward to look around, cursing when I noticed a group of four guys staring. I knew them. None would exactly be called a friend, but we all shared the same major. As soon as I reacted, Brady and Joe backed off and glanced toward the group of guys.

Both took a couple of steps away from me, and Joe said, "Let's go check on your contacts."

The guys kept moving, though one turned for a few seconds before putting more distance between our respective groups.

"I take it you know them?" Joe asked.

"Yeah, we've been in a bunch of classes together. They're ecosci majors too..." My speaking trailed off after that as I considered the possible ramifications of what those guys had just seen. Would they wait for me after class and beat the hell out of me? Maybe they'd be cool with it; maybe the expression on their faces was mere surprise there were three of us here.

Maybe I'll see a purple unicorn.

"I'm sorry, baby. I didn't even think—"

"None of us did," Brady cut in. "I guess we might find out what people think about us now. I can't believe I got so carried away in a public place."

Joe eyed me. "I don't like the thought of you being unprotected in those classes, or afterward. Maybe one of us should walk you."

I let out a half snort, half chuckle. "Yes, because having you there is going to intimidate four guys. All it would do is give them a second punching bag."

Brady laid a hand on my shoulder, but I shrugged it off. "Not everyone is a homophobe. Maybe they were okay with it, just shocked at seeing three of us and then realizing one of those three was you."

Wow, an uncharacteristically optimistic thought, at least for Brady.

"I wish I could believe that," I answered. "Did you see the looks on their faces? Not exactly murderous intent, but not waving a rainbow flag either."

Joe spoke. "Brady's right. They might just be in shock. Or maybe that one who looked back was interested in what he was seeing."

I shrugged. "I have no idea. Let's get outta here."

We picked up my lenses and got back to our suite around eight P.M. Each of us had work to do, so we settled down to it, and then slowly drifted toward the bed one at a time. Brady was the last to come to bed, and he didn't gather us up on each side like usual. I tried not to let it bother me; he was probably just tired. Econ was a bitch of a major and Brady worked harder than either me or Joe did.

I tossed and turned, trying not to disturb the other guys, but images of scenes like Justin taking a bat to the head in *Queer As Folk* and Jack being beaten to death with a tire iron in *Brokeback Mountain* assaulted my brain. Finally, a little after three A.M., I sat up, scrubbing my hands over my face. I didn't even know where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do, but trying to sleep was impossible.

A few minutes later I heard the bed sheets rustling and Brady was soon next to me, his arm wrapped around my shoulders.

"What's wrong?" he whispered.

"I can't forget seeing those guys tonight. I'm scared."

"Me, too. We were dumb and not thinking."

I motioned toward the door. "Lounge?"

Brady glanced over at Joe, curled up into a fetal position and seemingly sleeping peacefully. Nodding, Brady slowly rose. Both of us pulled sweats and hoodies on, since we slept naked, and then crept into the lounge.

Shivering, Brady said, "Floors are cold. Should've put on socks. Oh well, I'll curl my feet up on the couch and be okay."

"So were you not sleeping either or did I wake you with my nighttime acrobatics?"

"You didn't wake me. I was drifting in and out, never fully achieving sleep, and yet feeling too wiped out to do anything but lay there."

"Yeah, that feels familiar."

Brady ran his hand over my bedhead hair. "You know Joe and I love you, and we'd never do anything to intentionally out the three of us. I know Joe feels bad. Guilty might be a better word to use. He hardly said anything after it happened, and that continued until he went to bed."

"I noticed that too. I was trying to give him time to process."

Brady nodded. “Probably a good idea, but not too much time. I don’t want him getting all paranoid. He was out before, but not this obviously.”

“And neither one of us was. I think we’re gonna get propelled out of the closet whether we want everyone to know or not.”

“We knew something like this might happen.”

“Of course, but before it was an abstract concept. Now it’s real.” I leaned the back of my head on the sofa and closed my eyes. “Too real.”

Chapter Four

Joe

I worried about Trevor constantly. Any of us could get attacked, but Trevor was the smallest and the least able to defend himself. Brady had put on pounds of muscle in Spain, and I'd bulked up some since quitting soccer, so in terms of pure strength both of us would probably do okay in a one-on-one fight. The only thing was, rarely were bashings done by one person.

After class, I met Brady at the library to do some studying. At first, we'd gone back to the room, since we both had a couple of hours, but with time and privacy, studying wasn't the first thing on our minds.

"Hey. Can we go sit outside for a bit before we start?"

"Sure," Brady said, following me back out to the sunny courtyard in front of the library.

I sat on the stairs and heaved my backpack off my shoulder. "Man, that feels good."

Brady followed my lead. "Econ texts suck. I don't get why the college hasn't gone to e-textbooks yet. They require us to have laptops, and for what? Taking notes? Watching porn?"

Laughing, I shrugged. "Everything moves at a snail's pace here." Then I cleared my throat. "That's not what I wanted to talk about. I'm worried about Trevor."

"I've noticed. So has he, and I think it's making him even more nervous. He's so freaking jumpy he nearly took my head off for approaching him from the side the other day. And that was right outside the door to the suite."

I winced. I hadn't meant to make anything worse. "Has he said anything to you about those guys who saw us? Are they harassing him?"

"He told me they haven't caused any trouble, but they keep staring at him."

"I'm not too surprised, but I'm glad they're not in his face."

"At some point he's got to learn to fend for himself. You and I won't always be there, and he needs to feel confident that he can handle things."

“I was thinking along the same lines. What if we took some kind of self-defense class? Or maybe went back to weight lifting and dragged him with us? I know he thinks lifting is boring, but I’d feel better if he were stronger.”

“So would I. But really, no amount of self-defense or whatever is going to matter. If someone wants to jump him, they’ll find a way.” He must’ve noticed the color drain out of my face, because he quickly ran his knuckles over the back of my hand. I lowered my head as dizziness swamped me. “Sorry to be so blunt.”

I had to take several deep breaths before I could talk to Brady. Before I’d met these two guys, I’d prided myself on my ability to keep control of my emotions, especially where my sexuality was concerned. I hadn’t come out in high school. The possible reaction of the guys on the soccer team scared me. Plus, I didn’t come from a very big town, and attitudes there weren’t exactly in keeping with the times. But together they’d shattered the wall I’d built around my heart.

“No, I get what you’re saying. Are you suggesting that for the next two years we hide?”

“Or play it cool like we had been until that stupid stunt in the mall. I should’ve known, I should’ve thought about what we were doing—”

“Hey, you weren’t the only one there. This is not your fault. It’s on all of us.”

“Maybe we shouldn’t be living together.” Brady kicked at a small pebble, sending it flying. I was too stunned to even reply. “That guy down the hall has no roommate now, I could go in with him and leave you and Trev in the triple.”

“But...” I stopped in an attempt to articulate my thought, though that proved impossible since I had no idea where this idea was coming from. I blurted out the first thing that had jumped into my mind after he’d made the suggestion. “The guys in the suite seem cool. They don’t treat us weird. Why would you need to move out? I don’t get what you’re saying.”

Brady looked around, and I realized I’d made another dumb-ass mistake, having this conversation in a public place. “I know, but staying together is definite evidence for anyone looking to hurt us.”

Contemplating Brady leaving made my stomach turn. “Maybe I should go. Then you’d be around to protect Trev.”

He returned his attention to me. “I may be tall, but I’m not exactly chiseled. You’re just as strong, if not more so, than me.” He grabbed my shoulder. “Hey, don’t let this take over your life.” Dropping his hand to grip the strap of his backpack, as if he was physically, consciously trying to stop himself from touching me further, he mumbled, “That’s when they win.”

“I’m trying not to, okay, but I’m really worried about him.”

“Try a little harder. You’re freaking Trev out. Have some faith. Maybe he’ll surprise us.”

I sighed, pinching the bridge of my nose. “I will.”

“I’m gonna go talk to that guy about moving in with him. What’s his name again?”

“Alan, I think. He seems pretty okay.”

“I guess we’ll find out soon.”

When Trevor returned, we’d already moved Brady out. “What the hell is going on?” His gaze swept the room. “Where are you going?”

Brady jerked his thumb to the left. “Down the hall to room with that guy who was left with a single.”

“But why? Did I do something?” Trev looked like he might lose it soon, so I pulled him down on top of me where I sat on the edge of my bed.

Rubbing his back gently, I said, “None of us did anything, we’re just trying to give people a little less ammunition. If we aren’t all living together, it might take some focus off us.”

“We live in a suite with a total of nine guys, including the three of us. Who do we think is gonna cause a problem?” He twisted around to look at me.

“Hopefully no one, but let’s say one of the guys is in a frat, or plays a sport. We don’t know them that well; it’s entirely possible that’s the case. And one day his friend notices where he lives. This friend has heard rumors about these three gay guys all living together and thinks it’s weird. So he asks our suitemate about it. The suitemate tells him where we are, not thinking too much of it. Then a couple of weeks later we find a brick thrown through our window. I know I sound paranoid, and I’m not normally the pessimistic one around here,” I gave Brady a small smile, “but where you two are concerned, I’m always gonna want to protect you. If that makes me sound unreasonably suspicious, then so be it.”

Trevor sighed, rubbing his forehead. “Look, you guys know I’m a little freaked about everything, but even I wouldn’t have gone to drastic measures like moving one of us out.” He looked up at Brady, who leaned against one of the dressers, his arms folded and face expressionless. “Besides, are you actually gonna sleep in your own bed alone every night? And we’ll still be together during the day. How does this make sense? How does it help?”

I put my arms around Trev and squeezed. “We’re trying to keep everyone safe; doing anything within our power to shield ourselves, take some safeguards. There aren’t too many options we have control over, but this is one of them.”

“I get that. I totally do. But moving ten feet down the hall isn’t going to change much.”

Trev wrestled out of my grip. I didn’t resist him too much, but at least I’d gotten a real quick feel for his strength. My heart slowed to a somewhat more normal pace from a few moments ago when it had been doing an imitation of a cheetah on the run.

“Maybe not, but it’s the easiest thing I can do,” Brady pointed out. “I’ll switch my lunch and library times so we’re not together then either. We can still do breakfast and dinner. A few of the guys from my classes have asked me to join them for lunch, but I’ve always said no. We’ll lay low for a little while, see how things progress through the semester.”

Trevor punched the mattress he’d collapsed onto after freeing himself from me. “I fucking hate this.” He swiped at his eyes, and my body ached to comfort him, though I didn’t sense he’d welcome that. Brady and I exchanged a look, and he subtly shook his head. Trevor wrenched himself out of his jacket, flinging it across the room. His backpack went next, and Brady and I both winced, hoping he didn’t have anything breakable or volatile in there. With him, you could never tell. “I want to go back to Spain. We got a couple of raised eyebrows, but that was about it. No talk of getting bashed, or separating the three of us to supposedly keep us safe.”

“It *was* easier in Europe than it is here,” I told him. “And I wish things were different. Every day I wonder if this will be the day we get accepted as a normal part of society or the day we’re all marched off to some reformation camp because we’re ‘different’. The days don’t hit either extreme, obviously, but you know we can’t all go back to Spain. For one thing, it’s a ton of money. For another, our visas were for a specific thing and they’ve expired now. I

doubt they'll take 'want to live where I'm accepted' as a valid reason to grant new ones."

Trevor shot up and spun on us. I'd never seen him so angry. "You're both so calm about this. Are you really cool moving, Brady? Are you actually okay with letting him, Joe? Cause I'm not. I am really not." He paused and looked from one of us to the other. "You planned this. You knew you were going to do this. That's why it happened while I was at class. Way to give everyone a say in what happens around here."

"It's done," Brady answered, his tone flat. "Let's go get some dinner."

"Better not all go at once. Everyone will see us." Sarcasm dripped from Trev's voice, and Brady and I traded worried glances. We'd expected Trevor to take the news better than he had. Even a little better would've made this easier. I felt like a complete asshole for going behind his back. We were treating him like we were the big boys and he was the little brother following us around, begging us to let him play our game. That was a shitty thing to do. How could we possibly make up for this?

"You guys go," Brady said. "I need some time to arrange stuff in the room. I'll go later."

"Are you sure?" I asked.

Brady was sacrificing a lot for us, which Trevor, right now, couldn't see. He would, though. Once he got over the initial shock and hurt, he'd realize what Brady had offered to give up for us.

"Totally." He stepped up to Trevor, who didn't reach for him, like usual, but didn't back away either. Taking the sides of Trev's face in his large hands, Brady told him, "I love you. We can and will do anything we have to so we can all stay together... so to speak. I'm not giving up. He's not giving up." Brady jerked his head in my direction. "We knew this might not be easy. Give it time. We've only been back at school for a month. People need to get used to us, to this. It's not every day you see three gay guys all together in one relationship. We can't expect people to just nod and smile. Hets who did this would attract attention too."

"Yeah, by their buddies slapping them five," Trevor answered.

"And by a lot of people who wouldn't understand why two guys, or two girls for that matter, would want to share. Or who think it's all about sex," Brady argued. "Ménages of any kind would face scrutiny. A one-night stand, a

chance to see what it's like is different. A committed threesome is not something you see every day. Even in Europe we got some side eyes from people."

Pulling Trevor to him, Brady began planting soft little kisses all over his face, then took his mouth hard. I rose. *Time to get into this party.* Stepping behind Trevor, I gently bit the side of his neck and he moaned, holding my head with one hand. I pulled his T-shirt aside and sucked at a patch of skin until it turned red. Grinning, I moved over a bit and repeated the motion.

"What're you doin' back there?" Trevor mumbled. "You guys are trying to distract me."

"Giving you hickeys. And before you bitch, they're in places no one will see them. I like marking you."

"Mm, I do too," Brady growled, pulling Trev's shirt over his head and attacking his other shoulder. I wiggled out from underneath Trevor's hand and dropped to my knees. Trevor shifted his weight when I freed his erection, and soon Brady's stood proudly too. I held them both and began to lick and suck up and down their already-slick shafts.

"Bed," Trevor ordered, his voice uncharacteristically forceful, and the three of us fell back onto my bed, tangled in each other. I took the head of his cock in my mouth and swirled my tongue around it, then pushed both heads together and squeezed. Brady's dick, the larger of the two, bounced, and I deep-throated him as best I could. Even with somewhat more experience in giving head than either of my men, I couldn't take an entire seven-inch plus cock down my throat.

"Fuck..." Brady bucked when my tongue flicked over that sensitive spot that drove every man wild, right below the head.

"Get him, Joe. Get him good." Trevor pulled Brady's shirt off and began to get his revenge, pulling one of Brady's nipples into his mouth. I watched everything unfold from my vantage point. I loved watching my men together. Their pants remained at mid-thigh, but it apparently didn't bother them. *Good. Less work.* I had what I wanted anyway.

I sucked at Brady while running my hand up and down Trev's shaft. My own cock twisted in my boxers, but I didn't waste time doing anything about it. Uncomfortable as all hell, but I'd live. I needed Brady and Trevor to come now. We had to show Trevor we were still a functioning threesome, and though it would take a lot more than sex, at least it could be a start.

Brady's cock pulsed and I almost forgot to swallow, as I was so lost in the moment. He began to pull away, and after letting him go, I pounced on Trevor. Judging by the sounds he made, it wouldn't take much for him to get off.

"Wait," Trevor announced, gasping, his chest heaving. His heavily lidded gaze settled on Brady, who'd opened his eyes at Trev's exclamation. "I want to fuck you."

A natural top, Brady didn't often agree to being fucked, and an almost morbid curiosity found me staring at Brady. I had a good guess at Trevor's motivation for asking; he needed to reestablish a sense of equilibrium amongst the three of us. I understood that. Apparently so did Brady. He rolled over and then pushed his jeans and briefs further down before getting up on all fours. Trevor turned Brady's head, diving into his mouth with biting kisses. Watching Trev take over like this had my dick trying to burrow out of confinement. I wasted no time prepping Brady. When he could take three of my fingers, Trevor rolled on a condom and I lubed him up.

"So sexy," I murmured as Trevor slowly, with extreme care, pushed inside of Brady.

Trevor's chest heaved. He looked back at me. "I have an idea. Fuck me while I fuck him. I want you inside me." After bottoming out, he moved both him and Brady so I'd have an easier angle. "I don't need much," he said when I pressed a lubed finger into him. "Put on the condom and fuck me, baby."

"I don't want to hurt you."

"You won't. I *want* to feel it afterward. I love it when you guys take turns on me and hours later it's like your cocks are still there, hammering away at me. Now fuck me."

"How's this going to work?" I asked.

Brady spoke up. "If we all get on our hands and knees, Joe, you press inside Trev and then follow him when he thrusts into me. When you start to pull out again, Trevor will do the same. Sort of like a wave. I, uh, saw it in a gay porno movie once." He blushed, as much as he could with his skin tone, and for some reason that cracked me up.

Once I stopped laughing, I said, "I thought you were a virgin in Spain. Knew nothing."

"I *was* a virgin, but only in body. Of course I watched porn. I wasn't out; what else was I gonna do? Learned a lot from all those late nights."

“No wonder you were such a quick study.”

We’d never done this before, as amazing as that was considering the amount of sex we’d fit into our schedules in Spain and even back here at school. I shoved into Trev and he did the same to Brady. All three of us groaned. “Het sex can’t be this good,” Trev said through gritted teeth. “Love you guys.”

“We love you,” I answered, “and we love each other. We’ll figure all this out. For now, just feel.”

The three of us moved back and forth in an erotic rhythm, until Trevor’s control must’ve snapped, since he grabbed one of Brady’s shoulders and pounded into his ass. I glanced up to see if Brady looked to be in pain. His eyes were closed and his mouth open, but judging by the noises coming from that open mouth, he enjoyed being on the receiving end of Trevor’s quick, hard thrusts.

I sped up and, grunting, gave Trev everything I had. My head fell back and I panted as if I’d just run a marathon. My orgasm had snuck up on me so fast I’d hardly had time to enjoy it. Trevor roared and bent over Brady’s back, driving into him several more times before collapsing on top of him. We ended up like a stack of sweaty pancakes, and the smell of sex permeated the entire room.

Brady must’ve been dying beneath us between the heat we’d generated and our combined body weight, so I withdrew and stood on shaky legs to dispose of the condom. Trevor did the same while Brady simply rolled once again, a lazy smile playing over his exotic features.

“I’m starving,” Trevor declared.

Brady waved a lazy hand from my bed. “You guys go. I’m fine here for a while.”

Laughing, Trevor leaned down. “I love you.”

“Love you too, babe. And though I wasn’t sure I’d ever say this, thanks for the pounding. You’re right about how it feels afterward. I kinda like it.”

I also kissed Brady, and then Trev and I cleaned up, dressed, and left for dinner. Maybe, just maybe, everything would be okay. We needed to watch out for each other and stay strong.

Chapter Five

Brady

I ended up popping into the dining hall for dinner to go right before they closed. I'd ended up hanging out with my new roommate, Alan, and a couple of his friends, having beers and shooting the shit. Without food in my belly, I was feeling pretty happy by the time I left to get food, and I started in on my cheeseburger before I even got back to the room.

At first, I'd thought about bugging out when Alan's friends arrived, but when Alan invited me to stay and the others didn't sneer or make homophobic comments, I'd agreed. I reasoned that if they saw I was just like them, a college student fighting his way through life to figure out who he was, they might forget the whole "gay" thing. One thing I'd never understood about homophobes, or even other guys in general, was how they lumped all gay men into the hot-pink wearing, sashaying, stereotypical gay man portrayed so often in the media.

I loved sports, driving fast—tons of things straight guys liked. Just because I had no desire to eat pussy didn't mean I was some sort of alien creature. When I got back to the room, Alan had left, and I plopped down in my desk chair to finish eating. My phone chimed.

Can we come christen the room?

Trevor. I should've known. The guy was a true cock slut. Not that Joe or I minded...

Probably not a good idea. Dunno when A's coming back.

The phone had barely hit the fake wood top of the desk when it pinged again.

Spoilsport.

I snorted.

I need to do homework anyway. If you're so horny, attack Joe and do that thing that makes him swear like a sailor on shore leave.

I put the phone down and grabbed a bunch of fries, shoving them into my mouth.

How could I narrow that down? Every time I touch him he does that. ;-) Besides, he's working too.

I shook my head.

Can I suggest you do the same then? Maybe if you're a really good boy Joe will reward you.

I'd eaten several more handfuls of fries before the phone pinged again.

Not you?

Sighing, I debated on what to say.

I should stay here tonight. Doesn't do much good to be in separate rooms if I'm always over there. After a minute, I sent another text. *I adore you, don't ever forget that.*

When Alan came back a couple of hours later, I was in the middle of watching an episode of *The Simpsons* on my laptop. I ended up tilting the screen so we could both see from our respective beds, and we laughed through two more before I yawned.

"I need to hit the hay. I am not a morning person and I'm jammed between eight thirty and two tomorrow."

"Oh man, that sucks. What's your major, anyway?"

"Economics. Yours?"

"Accounting. And hey, about the whole gay thing..."

My muscles tensed. "Yeah?"

"I wanted to reiterate I have absolutely no problem with it. It's none of my business who's in love with who or why. And just so you know, I talked to my friends; anyone I thought may be coming here to hang. I doubt any of them are homophobes; we tend to be the 'live and let live' types. But I told them it wasn't cool if they ever said or did anything to you or your two... um, what do you call them since there's two?"

Laughing, I said, "Boyfriends."

"Oh. Well, that makes sense. Anyway, you shouldn't have any trouble from them."

"Thanks, man."

“And hey, anyone who can appreciate a classic like *The Simpsons* is a friend of mine.”

We both chuckled and said our good nights. I missed Joe and Trev, even though they both lay only feet away. It could just as easily have been a thousand miles. I hoped like hell this would get easier.

The next few weeks flew by, between attending classes, spending time with Joe and Trevor whenever I could, and getting to know Alan better. We discovered even more common interests, and when we decided to have a *South Park* marathon viewing party in the lounge and invited everyone in the suite, we both wondered how many guys would show up. Joe and Trevor came, of course, as well as two guys who didn't live in the suite, but I'd met before through Alan.

At first I feared they'd be the only people, but then the three guys who had the other triple suite and played on the school's volleyball team came lumbering in.

“Hey, sorry we're late. Practice ran over. We'll take quick showers so we don't stink up the place and then be out,” one of them said. “We forgot to mention we'd be here, but not until our match was done. Sorry about that. You'd think between the three of us we could remember—”

Another chuckled. “But never do. Someone ordering pizza? We're freaking starving.”

“We can order pizza,” I told them. “Three large pies enough? Maybe we should get four.”

“Get four,” the first guy said with a chuckle. “These two can really put it away.”

“Four it is. I'll call it in and get different ones so hopefully there's at least one each of us will like.”

“Cool, man, thanks. We'll get you some bank when we get dressed.”

“Don't worry about it. My treat.”

The guy's eyebrows knitted. “You sure, dude?”

“Positive.”

“Okay, that's awesome, thanks. See ya in a bit.” As they started to leave, he called back, “We'll get the next time.”

Warmth settled in my chest. Maybe it was possible to have real friends. We'd all had some friends before we'd left for Spain, and for the most part those relationships remained intact although none of us saw them much except for classes. It would be such a relief to have a bunch of people we could count on, especially if Trev ever got accosted when Joe and I weren't around. Everyone liked Trevor—how could you not, well, if you weren't homophobic, anyway. I couldn't imagine any of these guys witnessing Trevor getting beaten on and not stepping in.

I pulled my cell and wallet out of my pocket. I placed the order, adding soda pop and a couple of sports drinks, plus garlic knots. After I'd confirmed the order, I gave them my credit card number and they said it would be around forty-five minutes.

I hung up and Alan said, "I know what you said to those guys, but that's an awful lot of food to pay yourself."

"My treat. It's no biggie. My parents give me 'discretionary money' every month."

"If you're absolutely certain..."

"Totally."

"Don't argue with him," Trevor advised Alan. "He's as stubborn as a bull."

I considered answering with a flirty comment, but I swallowed it until Alan said, "Go ahead and say what you were thinking. You're not gonna gross us out."

Raising one eyebrow, I asked, "Now I need to ask if *you're* absolutely certain?"

His friends laughed. "As long as you don't suggest an orgy, we're good."

"We're strictly two man guys," I replied with a grin. "And I was gonna say, I'm a hell of a lot hotter than a bull."

"And you're right," Alan said. "My aunt and uncle own a farm. Bulls are gross."

"Should I be happy you don't find me gross?"

"Hey, that's your decision. What do you guys think? Wanna wait for the guys?"

“Sure. We’ve got all night,” Joe pointed out. He looked around. “Though we might need more furniture in here or half of us willing to sit on the floor. I guess we didn’t think this through. We could use desk chairs, but those things are uncomfortable as hell and I spend enough time in them anyway.”

Alan rose. “I agree. I want to be comfortable. I’ll go ask the guys across the hall if we can borrow some from their lounge. Of course, then we’ll probably have to issue an invite. Hopefully they’ll be busy.” Joe followed him out the door and soon they came banging back in, carrying a couch. One guy followed them with a chair. “Bud, this is great, thanks.”

“So you said it’s a *South Park* marathon?”

“Yeah. You’re welcome to stay since you just gave up most of your lounge’s furniture.”

“Maybe in a bit. Waiting on the girlfriend to call. You know how it is.”

His gaze skittered to us, and I said, “It’s the same for us. We’re gay, not other life forms.”

Joe, who’d put his side of the couch down, stiffened, but the guy shook his head. “Sorry. I don’t have anything against y’all, I just haven’t been around anyone who’s gay. The town I come from has ten times as many cows as people. By the way, cow tipping isn’t as fun as it looks. To make up for my dumb-ass behavior, when I come back I’ll bring beer.”

Joe nodded. “Great, sounds perfect with pizza. Before you ask, yes, even gays drink beer. We’re college students. It’s in the handbook, isn’t it?” Joe asked and everyone laughed, cutting the tension. “Thanks again.”

“Later.”

The three of us exchanged a half-amused, half-shocked look. For the first time, I allowed myself to believe everything would be all right.

A few weeks later, I hustled along the narrow, makeshift path between two of the math buildings, booking it to the library to meet my study partner for a project comparing the economics of two underdeveloped countries for a co-written paper.

“Fag!” My shoulder carrying my backpack got shoved hard, and the momentum made me stumble.

“Fucking homo,” another snarled.

Glancing around, I quickly ascertained taking this shortcut had been a bad idea. No one could see us amongst the overgrown foliage. That same shoulder took another shot, and I went down on one knee, my jeans sinking into the muck left by a recent rain. I caught myself with both hands before I fell completely, also getting covered in mud and dying grass. My backpack, still attached to me by my forearm, landed next to me.

“Come on, cocksucker. Get up and show me what you’ve got,” the first one said, spitting on the ground about a half-inch from my grimy hand. “Maybe I’ll even let you suck my dick, take a nice, big load of cum. That’s what you want, isn’t it?”

Before I could even turn to get a look at them, they’d begun to run the way we’d all come. I got a glance of sweats and hoodies, along with baseball hats, which gave me little to no idea of who they were. Sighing, I got myself up and checked for damage. My shoulder throbbed, but I didn’t think any serious damage had been done. My jeans were caked in mud, and my hands were a mess of grime and scrapes. Even my backpack hadn’t escaped the onslaught. The strap that had been free was now dotted with crap and the entire front was covered from hitting the ground.

I needed to meet my partner, so with a disgusted look at myself I continued on to the library. We were meeting in the atrium, and when he saw me, he asked, “Holy shit, what happened to you?”

No way was I telling him the truth. He appeared to be an okay guy, but I wasn’t sure I could trust him. “I was hurrying here and one of my feet went out from under me when it hit the mud on a little shortcut I take sometimes.” Paranoia began to creep into my brain. Was he friends with these guys? Had he known where I’d be? *No, impossible.* “It was stupid and I’m gonna go clean up. Wanna get us a table and I’ll be up in about ten?”

“We can postpone if you want to go change.”

“Nah, it’s mostly my knee, I’ll just throw these in the wash later. No biggie. Third floor?”

“Yeah. Take your time.”

I felt like a complete idiot. As I tried to remove the caked-on mud and crud as best I could without spreading it around and making everything worse, I debated calling or texting the other two guys. Should I warn them in case these jerk-offs came after them?

In the end, I called Joe. Of the two, he was less likely to freak out. I hoped. He picked up on the fourth ring. “Babe, I’m in lab. What’s up?”

“Shit, I’m sorry,” I said as I paced in front of the library. I’d gone outside to make the phone call where I didn’t have to worry about as many people hearing.

“That’s okay. You don’t sound right. What’s going on?”

“I, um, kinda got shoved around by a couple of homophobes.”

“Shit! Are you hurt? Wait, I’m going outside.” He must’ve left the classroom, since he said, “My entire lab doesn’t need to hear this conversation.”

“Got it. Anyway, my shoulder’s wrenched pretty good, and my knee and hands are scraped up, but other than that, no.”

“Where did this happen? When?”

“On a little shortcut between the math buildings. I was late and didn’t think.”

Joe sighed. “Honey, you need to be more aware of your surroundings. They could’ve kicked the shit out of you.” His voice cracked and I winced.

“I’m okay.”

“But you might not have been. Where are you? I’ll come get you.”

“I’m at the library, and I need to stay here. I’m working on a project. Plus, you’ve got lab. I’m fine; I just wanted to let you know. I didn’t call Trev. I figured if you knew you might be able to look out for him.”

“I always do, both of us do when we’re with him. But he’s gonna notice if you start getting overly protective.”

“I’ll try not to.”

“Did you see them?”

Blowing out a breath, I said, “Not much. Sweat suits, baseball hats, not much else. They were faced away from me and not exactly taking their time getting outta there.”

“Are you completely certain you’re okay?”

“Yeah. I’ll see you later, though?”

“Definitely. So what’s our story for Trev?”

I shrugged, which sent a twinge of pain into my shoulder. Not smart, considering Joe couldn’t even see me. “The same one I just told my partner. Slipped on the wet mud.”

“Hopefully he buys it. I don’t want him looking over his shoulder every time he leaves the suite.”

“Me neither. Anyway, I gotta go. My partner is waiting. Love you.”

“Love you, too, baby.”

Over the next few weeks, my head was on a swivel, just like we hadn’t wanted for Trevor, but nothing else happened. Trevor seemed to accept my explanation, which put Joe and me at ease. As time went by, I found myself becoming increasingly obsessed that one of us would get bashed.

Joe and I tried not to leave Trev alone and enlisted the assistance of Alan and his friends, who we’d gotten to know pretty well and trusted, for when we couldn’t be around. I asked some people in the Gay-Straight Alliance if they’d help us protect him, and mentioned it’d be safer for everyone, including the straight guys, who had put themselves in a vulnerable position simply by aligning with us.

Even the volleyball guys offered to keep an eye out for him. At least with that many people around I could have some peace of mind. Joe suggested I might be overreacting, and I knew it was a possibility, especially since some jerk-offs had already come after me, the biggest of the three of us. Obviously my size hadn’t intimidated them, despite how I’d added more bulk lifting weights with Joe again.

One night as Joe and I were waiting on him so we could go see a movie, Trevor burst in the door and threw his backpack on his bed. We’d been cuddling on Joe’s bed, and he whirled to face us, his expression darker than I’d ever seen it. He began to pace in the small area between our beds, shaking his head. Joe and I waited him out. I couldn’t speak for Joe, but that seemed the most prudent option.

“If I didn’t know better, I’d think you guys were having me shadowed or spied on. Everywhere I look, someone’s offering to walk me to class, or come to the library with me. But I can chalk that up to people simply being nice, right?” He glared at both of us in turn and we both squirmed. A truly angry Trevor was actually pretty scary. He’d never harm either one of us. I believed

that completely, but he could certainly break our hearts. I had to come clean. If not for me, for Joe. Trevor continued, his voice rising. “Right? Because my boyfriends wouldn’t have half of UVB breathing down my neck for no reason.”

I put up a hand before Joe could say anything. “Remember when I slipped?”

Trevor nodded, his lips thinning and eyes narrowed. “What actually happened? It would be nice to hear the truth without the two of you sanitizing things or pretending all was right with the world. You thought I wouldn’t notice that, huh? So give me the story, and so help me God, if I think you’re lying we’re done.”

Joe gasped and started to sit up. “Trev—”

Trevor pointed to me. “It’s obvious Brady’s the ringleader here, so I’d like to hear the words directly from him if you don’t mind.” His voice dripped acid.

I took a deep breath. “It was muddy that day, obviously, but I didn’t fall on my own. I had some help. Two guys. And before you ask, I didn’t see anything that could identify them. They shoved me a couple of times, I fell, they called me some names, and then they ran.”

“And you didn’t think to share this with me?” His tone was dead flat. “What, you think it’s right for you two to make a decision about how much I can handle? I would never lie to you guys about something this serious. You can’t even begin to understand how hurt and angry I am. Don’t you think instead of siccing half the student body on my ass you might’ve been better off telling me the truth in the first place?” His voice had risen again as he spoke. “Did you report it to campus security?”

“No. What would I have said? Two goons pushed me, I fell, they ran?”

Trevor looked like I’d never seen him. His fists clenched and unclenched at his sides, and his face was blotched with red. “They need to have a record, asshole. Precedent.”

Joe and I both physically recoiled at Trevor’s words. Like anybody, we fought sometimes, but never had one of us gone to that extreme.

“Trev, that’s not copasetic,” Joe said, a warning tone to *his* voice. What the hell was happening?

“Neither is keeping me in the dark so the concept of being attacked remained abstract when it really wasn’t at all. I’ve been careful, but knowing you actually...” He threw his hands up. “I don’t even know what I want to say

right now, but I do know I should leave before it's something I'll regret, because right now..." Trevor let out an anguished cry, spun, and stalked to the door. "*Do not follow me.*"

He slammed the door so hard it rattled on its hinges. I dropped my elbows to my knees, my head in my hands, and rocked back and forth, trying to keep myself together. Nausea rolled over me. "He's right. Right about every damn bit of it." I sniffed as tears gathered in the corners of my eyes. "We were putting him in danger by keeping this from him."

Joe put his arm around me. I didn't move away, but I didn't return the gesture. I didn't deserve comfort, not when we'd just destroyed Trevor. "We did what we thought was best."

I jumped up, running my hands through my hair. "Yeah, and that worked out so well, didn't it? I was such an idiot to think he wouldn't find out. My fucking stupid paranoia." I turned to him. "If I were him I'd be pissed as hell right now too. I just hope he doesn't do anything stupid."

"He won't. No matter how angry he is, he won't go off by himself or anything like that. If I had to guess, he's gonna call someone from the Alliance and go talk to them, which is probably the best thing he could do right now anyway." Joe rose and put his arms around me, murmuring directly into my ear. "You did what you thought was right because you want to protect him. It comes naturally when you love someone. And he loves you. He's mad as hell right now, but he'll come around."

"What if he doesn't?" A tear escaped and Joe wiped it away with the pad of his thumb.

"He will. What we have is too good to give up over something like this."

"I hope so."

"Let's lie down for a while." Joe led me over to his bed again, and I went willingly, letting him undress me as I stood there. We climbed into bed and I curled up facing the wall. Joe tutted and pulled me back against him. "Get some rest."

Not likely.

Chapter Six

Trevor

I dashed out of the room with no real idea of where I wanted to go. Night had fallen during our argument. Even in my current state I knew I shouldn't be running all over the campus alone. Stopping, I leaned against the railing in front of the suite building next to ours and pulled out my phone. Over the past few months, I'd become friends with two girls who were best friends with each other, one, a lesbian, and the other straight. Together they served as co-presidents of the Gay-Straight Alliance. I didn't think they'd been in on the "Keep Poor Little Trevor Safe" project.

"Trevor?"

"Hey, Shannon."

"What's up?"

"I know this is kind of, well, last minute and totally presumptuous, but do you and Delia have plans tonight? Could I maybe come over?" I swallowed around the lump in my throat and then tried to force myself to take some deep, hopefully calming breaths. Didn't work. A couple of times, I'd glanced back toward our building, but neither Brady nor Joe emerged.

"Of course, honey. You okay?"

"Um, not really, but I'll tell you about it when I get there."

"We'll be waiting."

I hung up and walked over to their on-campus apartment. When I'd first seen it, I'd been really jealous, since a place like that would've been perfect for the three of us. I sniffed. I didn't want to cry. Already Brady and Joe thought I couldn't handle anything like an adult, and if I started blubbering I'd prove them right, even if they weren't there to witness it.

Shannon opened the door after I knocked, and immediately drew me into her arms. Both she and Delia were really affectionate people, and I loved that. Joe and Brady would cuddle in bed, but out of it, not so much—at least, not here at school. In Spain there'd been no problem.

"What's wrong? Want a hard cider? We still have a few from when you were over last week."

“Sure.” I hadn’t eaten, since I’d been planning on making popcorn at the movie my dinner, but I didn’t care. I sank into their couch, and after bringing me the bottle of cider, Shannon curled up next to me.

“Delia’s in the shower, but she’ll be out in a sec. Wanna wait for her?”

“Might as well.” We talked about the Gay-Straight Alliance’s upcoming event, which I was helping with, and general stuff about classes.

Delia appeared in yoga pants and a fleece and said, “Move over. You’re getting a double snuggle today.”

Despite the barrage of emotions assaulting me from all angles, I smiled. Delia settled next to me, and having both of them there, cuddled up to me like two very large cats, unleashed something inside me. Tears ran down my face, and I couldn’t talk for a minute. When I could, I relayed the tale to them, with Delia holding my bottle of cider and Shannon a box of tissues. I’d turned off my phone as soon as I’d hung up earlier, and now it felt like a weight, an anchor, still holding me to Brady and Joe.

Of course I still loved them both, even after what they’d done. In the back of my mind, I knew they loved me, too, and had been doing what they’d thought was best, but the two of them making a big decision without giving me the courtesy of knowing or the faith I could handle it really hurt. Yeah, I wasn’t as big as either of them, but hell, Brady was the biggest—well, the tallest—of all three, and he’d been the one who’d gotten accosted.

After I finished, Delia and Shannon remained silent for a few minutes. I sipped my cider and laid my head on Delia’s shoulder. Taking in a shaky breath, I waited for them to speak. I knew both well enough to understand they weighed their words carefully.

“We all know why they did this,” Shannon began. “But that doesn’t excuse them from keeping this incident to themselves. In fact, they should’ve told us, too, so we could warn the membership.”

I hadn’t even considered that, but they were right. “Neither one of them told you?”

“Nope, this is the first I’ve heard of it. They probably didn’t want you to find out about it when you got the email or heard about it in a meeting.” Delia echoed her assertion and Shannon went on. “But it’s done, so what you actually need to resolve is where you want to go from here.”

“I don’t want to break up, but I’m furious.”

“As you have every right to be,” Delia answered.

“They’re treating me like a kid.”

“It would appear that way,” Delia agreed. “They weren’t being malicious but were still wrong to not keep you in the loop.”

“Hey, I know this a little off-topic, but should we send out an email to the membership now?” Shannon asked. “We could keep Brady anonymous.”

I shrugged. “You’d have to ask Brady. Personally, I always believed forewarned was forearmed. I think that’s one reason I’m so irritated. I feel like they actually put me in *more* danger by not talking to me about it.”

“Not to defend their actions, since they were obviously in the wrong, but they did it because they thought they were protecting you,” Shannon said, squeezing me and echoing my own thoughts. “It’s obvious how much you all love each other. It’s amazing to watch you all together. It gives the rest of us hope. Speaking of them, hon, do they know where you are right now?”

Heat suffused my face. “No.”

Shannon pushed me. “Call them. They’re probably worried sick if you ran out.”

“Yeah, worried sick because they think I can’t handle myself.”

Now Delia spoke again. “No, because you left and were upset. Give them a little leeway. Call them.”

I fidgeted, finding it impossible to stay still with two sets of female eyes narrowed at me. “Fine. I turned off my phone after I called you.”

“Wanna stay here?” Shannon asked. “We don’t mind. You’d have some time to yourself, well, relatively speaking, and you can go back with a more level head when you’re ready to discuss things.”

“If I could that’d be great. I’m just not ready to talk yet. My emotions are so close to the surface and if I started crying I’d hate myself.”

“Showing them how you feel isn’t something you should beat yourself up about.”

Delia nodded. “Definitely not.”

“I’d feel weak, like I was giving them a reason for having kept all this from me.”

“I guess in a twisted way that makes sense.” Shannon kissed me on the cheek. “Sheesh. Even you gay guys think you have to act macho all the time.”

“We *are* macho. Well, a lot of us, anyway. Liking sucking cock and watching sports are not mutually exclusive.” Shannon made a face. I’d known that would get her. I pulled out my phone. “I’ll call Joe now. I’m sure they’re probably still together.”

Joe picked up on the first ring. “Trev?”

“Yeah.”

“Are you okay?”

“You’re not going to ask where I am so you can put on your cape and sweep in to protect me?” A low blow, but I didn’t feel charitable at the moment.

“No. If you want to tell us, we’d feel better, just like any of us would if one left suddenly after a fight.”

“So Brady’s there with you?”

“Yeah. He feels terrible.”

I sighed. “Look, I’m incensed right now, not to mention offended, but you guys know this is just a fight, right?”

“We were hoping so. We both love you so much and though sorry isn’t nearly enough to make up for what we did, it’s all we have to offer right now. Brady wants to talk to you.”

“No. I need some time away from him. I know that’ll hurt, but maybe he’ll consider how crushed and resentful I am by what he, and by extension, you, did.”

“Okay, if you don’t want to talk, we’ll respect that.”

I pinched the bridge of my nose where a headache had formed. “Anyway, I’m at Shannon and Delia’s apartment. I’m gonna stay here for a few days, clear my head. How about this? It’s Wednesday, why don’t we plan to go to brunch Saturday morning. All of us.” Saturday brunch at UVB was actually pretty good, and before we’d stopped eating meals together we’d gone every Saturday.

“Are you sure you want to do that?”

“Yeah. Like I said, I’m mad, and probably will be for a while, but we knew everything wouldn’t be sunshine and roses.”

“Do you want me to drop off some clothes for you? I can leave them outside the door.”

I hadn't even considered I'd be sleeping in jeans and a sweater, unless the girls didn't mind me stripping down on their couch. I chuckled.

“Yeah, that would be great if you could. I doubt Shannon and Delia want my naked ass anywhere near their couch cushions.”

“Eww,” they both echoed, as if on cue.

Joe laughed. “Tell them I heard that and I disagree. Your ass is perfection. Gimme twenty. And I'll come alone.”

“Thanks, man.”

“Sure thing.”

I hung up. “He's bringing me some clothes to wear for bed and the next few days. He'll be here in about twenty minutes.” I didn't mention that last part about him hearing. For some reason, I wanted to keep that between us, not share it with the world.

“Want us to make ourselves scarce?”

“Nah.”

A knock sounded at the door a little while later, and Delia and Shannon, both wearing shit-eating grins, ran into Delia's room as I got up to answer the door.

“Hey,” Joe said, shifting from foot to foot as he stood in the doorway with a duffel in his hand.

“Wanna come in for a minute?”

A breath escaped his lungs and his shoulders visibly relaxed. “Yeah, that'd be great.” Had he really been worried about what I'd say or do? I stepped back and Joe walked in. He'd been here several times before, too, so he was familiar with the place. After setting the bag on one of the kitchen chairs, he turned to me. “I hate myself for hurting you. Brady's a mess. I don't expect you to feel sorry for him, but you should know he's absolutely wrecked. He thinks he ruined everything and it was all his fault. We both acted like dicks.”

“Yeah, but I know you did it because you were concerned about me. You went about showing it the wrong way.” One side of my mouth kicked up involuntarily. “The decision was made with the best intentions.”

Joe took a step forward, putting us a little over a foot apart. I didn't back away and Joe let out another breath. "I swear it'll never happen again. We're a team."

"Better not. From now on I expect you to tell me if something happens, if *anything* happens, even something relatively minor like this."

"We will. Brady's back in the suite pacing. I should probably get back to him before he wears a hole in the floor and we get a lot friendlier with the guys below us."

Typical Brady.

Joe went on. "He lit up like a freaking Christmas tree when I told him you wanted all of us to go to brunch on Saturday. I think he worried you'd break things off, or tell him you didn't love him anymore." Warmth curled through my stomach and I smiled. "God, you're gorgeous and so sweet. How did we get so lucky? I love you. Brady loves you." Joe touched our foreheads together and again, I didn't move away. I needed to feel him as badly as he needed to feel me. "Can I kiss you? I won't be able to for far too long. Saturday seems eons away."

"Yeah," I whispered, gazing into his beautiful blue eyes so close to mine.

He didn't waste any time, wrapping both arms around me and pulling us together. I gasped when our bodies made contact. Apparently they hadn't gotten the memo that things were a little rocky in paradise. Soon, his lips found mine, and he gently nipped at my lower lip before he tilted his head and kissed me harder. My arms gripped his hips through his jeans and kept our crotches lined up as my mouth opened for him. Joe groaned and then stepped back. "Um, are we alone?" He glanced down the hallway.

"No, Shannon and Delia went into one of the bedrooms so we could have some privacy."

"What did they think I was gonna do, bend you over the kitchen table?" He turned to assess it. "Bet it would hold you, though."

I rolled my eyes, shaking my head. "And you say I'm the nympho."

"Kiss me again before I decide to test my theory that table would hold you."

This time, I plunged my tongue into his mouth. Backing him up until he hit the wall near the door, I kept that tight hold on his hips. He might very well have marks tomorrow, and I kind of liked that idea.

“Taste so good,” I murmured. “We don’t get enough time to enjoy simple things like this.”

“I agree. We’ll work on that. Together. Right now, though, I want you.”

I put a finger over his mouth. “Let’s wait. We’ll talk everything out and then celebrate. How’s that?”

“Sounds like a great plan, except that I want your cock in my mouth. I want it in my ass. I want it any way I can get it.”

“I had no idea you were such a dirty talker,” I murmured, palming his erection.

“Fuck...” Joe’s head hit the wall and he bit his lip.

“Now go and console Brady.”

“What? You’re leaving me like this?”

“Yep. I’m sure Brady would be happy to help you out with that. Thanks for the clothes.”

Joe stole another kiss, surprising me by swinging both of us around until my back was to the wall. “I could suck you.”

“I highly doubt Shannon and Delia want to hear the sounds I make when you do that. Now go, or I’ll think you only want me for my body.”

Joe’s face went instantly serious. “I do want you, all of you, forever. If I have my way we’ll be together even when we’re old men bitching at each other over cards.”

He’d never said anything like that. None of us had, it had all been inferred, but not spoken out loud.

My hand flew up to cover my mouth, and I took several seconds to get myself back under control before squeaking out, “Sounds good to me. Now go.”

Joe flicked his tongue over my earlobe. I shivered. “Okay, I’m leaving. But remember what I said.”

“I doubt I could forget even if I wanted to, which I don’t.”

After one more quick kiss, Joe went out the door. I leaned against it, sighing. Why did life have to be so hard?

We met at ten A.M. on Saturday for brunch. I struggled with my lingering anger, although Joe's statement played on a loop inside my head. Had he said the same thing to Brady? If so, how had he taken it? I wanted us to be together forever too. I ached with the need of it. Continuing this argument got in the way of that happening, so it had to end. It was imperative I let go of the negative emotions.

Brady watched me throughout brunch, no doubt assessing if I was still mad. I ran my shoe up the inside of his leg, and he startled, his face swiveling toward me.

"I'm letting it go, Brady. You did what you thought was right and you'd never intentionally hurt me. I know that in the deepest recesses of my heart. The second thing I know is that I want to be with you both forever." I glanced at Joe, whose gaze flitted to Brady and then back to me. Briefly, I grabbed his hand. "The three of us were meant to be together. We all know it's true. We did practically from the moment we met."

Brady brought my hand to his lips and kissed it. "You're precious to me. This relationship is the only thing in my entire life that I've never had a doubt about. I can't live without you. The past couple of days have been torture. Seeing you around, but knowing you weren't coming back to the suite because of me... it put a lot in perspective."

We finished eating and decided to go back to the room to take a nap and cuddle. None of us had been sleeping well. Homework loomed for everyone, but we wouldn't be worth a damn if we were exhausted.

On the way out, a couple of frat guys approached us and I stiffened. I felt the warmth of Brady's body against my back, and Joe remained close to my side.

"Well, well, guys. Looks like the flamers have a little club of their own."

Joe spoke. "Why don't we all just move along? You can enjoy your breakfast and we can go on our way. No harm, no foul."

One of the two sneered. "No foul. Just the sight of you all disgusts me. I'm about to throw up."

"I think that may have to do more with your alcohol consumption last night."

Joe, what the fuck are you doing?

“How the hell would you know about it? Unless there’s a frat for nancy boys that I’ve never heard of, you and Greek life are not familiar with each other.”

“I could say the same of you. You’ve got no clue about gay men. I played soccer for years, until I destroyed my ankle. I love watching college basketball. *The Simpsons* and *South Park* are two of the funniest things I’ve ever seen. See, we’re not always sitting around having sex any more than you are. But if we do get horny, we simply choose the person or people who turn us on. By the way, that’s not usually straight men. If we know you’re straight, why would we bother?”

The guy’s teeth clacked together, and both he and his friend scoffed at us. “Don’t give me that bullshit. We’ve seen gay dudes looking at us.”

“Yeah, probably to say, ‘there goes that homophobic asshole,’” Brady added.

Fuck. Not him, too. I feared hyperventilation would be a very real problem in the near future.

The guy who’d done all the talking so far pointed at me. “You got anything to say, cocksucker?”

“Don’t call him that.” Brady’s tone exuded disdain, and I prayed the whole cafeteria wasn’t about to jump us.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed two girls raising their phones surreptitiously. I could only guess they were planning to take video of the events unfolding. Hopefully they were on our side, though it wouldn’t matter much if the college saw the video. UVB didn’t exactly festoon the campus with rainbow flags, but the school supported LGBT students. They funded the Gay-Straight Alliance and were working with the You Can Play project to make a video showcasing the school’s athletic director and athletes from several sports saying they’d welcome LGBT athletes. This confrontation definitely hadn’t gone unnoticed as various other people moved closer, and several more pulled out phones, but the frat guys either didn’t notice or didn’t care.

“I’ll call the little fudge packer anything I want. What’re you gonna do about it? Hit me with that limp wrist?” He demonstrated and his friend cracked up, but I noticed no one else did.

We were all near the dish area, and the guy picked up a bowl still filled with soggy cereal and milk and flung it in our direction, followed by the remains of a

glass of tomato juice. Though all three of us jumped back, the milk and juice splashed Joe and me on the legs of our jeans.

“Motherfucker,” Joe exclaimed. With teeth bared, he asked, “You wanna know what we’ll do?”

I grabbed his arm, afraid he’d lunge at any moment and start a melee. “They’re not worth it.”

“We’re not worth it? You faggots are a waste of oxygen.”

Suddenly my view was blocked by another group of guys, and my hand dropped from Joe’s arm. I recognized them from the Gay-Straight Alliance meetings. They were the guys from the UVB’s soccer team. Wow, had they gotten bigger? I couldn’t even see around them without moving to the side.

“Leave them alone or you’ll be dealing with us, too,” one guy named Matt said, crossing his arms over his chest and bracing his legs shoulder-width apart, as if preparing for a fight. *Shit, I hope it doesn’t come to that.* I hated physical violence, even if used to support our cause. And why should these guys possibly get beaten up for us? The odds were in our favor with six of us and two of them, but who knew who’d jump in to help either side? This could get way out of hand.

“What’re you, friends with these fairies?” the one who’d spoken earlier asked, while his friend smirked beside him. Both of them looked disgusting, clad in stained hoodies with their frat’s letters on the front, along with sweats, sneakers, and the good ole backward baseball hat which they’d no doubt jammed onto their obviously dirty hair. *Eww.*

“Yeah, we are. And they’re not doing anything wrong, so why don’t you take your hungover asses out of here? You might not have noticed during your ignorant, homophobic tirade, but a bunch of students are taking videos. What do you think your frat’s national council would think about this? Or the dean?”

I peeked between two large sets of biceps, accentuated by the way the players had crossed their arms. *Yeah, this dude isn’t too bright if he thinks he’d win a fight against us.* The guy’s face screwed up. “I’m not worried. Our frat brothers will stand behind me, and as far as the dean is concerned, I’d bet he’ll look the other way, considering the amount of money my family gives to this school. And what’s this bullshit about not doing anything wrong? Are you even serious with this? You don’t think three guys fucking each other like bunnies is disgusting? Two is bad enough, but three? Holy shit. Does kinda make you

wonder... which of them takes it up the ass and which supplies the sausage.” His friend laughed again and the guy went on, digging himself deeper and deeper. “We don’t want their kind at our school. Sullies the reputation.”

“You wanna talk about reputation?” Matt asked. “Isn’t Alpha Kappa Omega the frat that got in trouble last spring for nearly killing one of their pledges?” Several people nodded or confirmed his statement. “How’d that happen? Oh, yeah. Boiling hot water laced with pepper spray was poured down their backs. One almost died from an allergic reaction and a couple of others needed skin grafts to fix the burns, if I recall correctly. I’m betting that didn’t help the university’s reputation either, and it’s far worse than anything these guys have ever done or will do. They love each other, and it’s none of your or anyone else’s business how they choose to live their lives.”

Another guy stepped forward. “One of those pledges was my friend. He had to drop out of school because the nerves in his back were damaged. He couldn’t sleep or even sit up because he was in so much pain. He’s only just now starting to recover. I’d say if anyone should feel bad about what they’ve done, it’s you assholes.”

The crowd who’d now assembled murmured their agreement, and I glanced around, wondering where the hell Campus Security was. Surely someone had called by now. Yeah, these frat boys were idiots, but with the people around us closing in even more, I was really worried the situation would escalate and we’d have a brawl on our hands. My fists clenched and unclenched, my palms sweaty.

Joe and Brady hadn’t said anything since Matt and his teammates had arrived on the scene, though Brady’s large hand now wrapped around my shoulders. I could sense tension in both of them, but they hadn’t moved, thank God.

The frat guys addressed Matt again. “You a fag too? Is that why you’re defending these pansies?”

“No, I’m straight, but you don’t have to be gay to know love is love.”

“Love is love? Now you’re just sprouting propaganda from the left. They love the gays, at least to their faces. And what the fuck does that even mean?”

A girl chimed in. “Exactly what he said. Love is love. Who or how you choose to love is between you and the person or people you’re in love with. Nobody else should have a say.”

Her friend then spoke. “All you’re doing here is showing how ignorant and intolerant you guys are. The best thing for you to do now is walk away with your tails between your legs and hope we don’t turn our videos over to the school.”

The guy motioned to us. “And let this revolting relationship go on? Someone’s gotta do something. Me and a lot of others like me don’t want their kind at my school.”

“Won’t be your school much longer,” someone near us mumbled.

Several Campus Security officers burst through the doors of the dining hall. *Took them long enough.* One of them ordered, “All right, show’s over. Everyone move along, except you two,” he pointed to the frat members, and then to us. “And you guys.”

The guy who’d spoken about his friend held up his phone. “A bunch of us have video of what happened. Not from the very beginning, but I’m sure a lot of people heard what they said and saw what that one guy did.” He pointed to our pants and the officer nodded.

The frat members actually seemed startled, and it became difficult to hold in a chuckle. Brady’s hand tightened on my shoulder. “Be cool,” he whispered.

“Okay,” the officer answered. “Send any video evidence to us via email. The address is CampusSecurity at UVB dot edu. That way we don’t have a crowd sitting around the office all day.”

“Will do, though I’d like to stick around long enough to give you a statement about what happened before I started shooting the video.” Several students murmured their assent, and the officer pointed them to different tables, and officers followed. Some students looked to be sending the files already. *No one gets away with anything now that smartphones are everywhere.* Right then, I could’ve kissed the inventor of them. Hopefully their videos, along with crowd statements and those from the six of us, would take these jerk-offs down. Then maybe others would see what happened and leave us the fuck alone.

Most of the other people moved away, and the officer turned toward the frat guys. “I have a pretty good idea of what went on here today, so you two are coming to the Campus Security office. You know there are cameras in here, too, right? Or did you forget about that while you plowed on with your little rant?”

The guy who hadn’t spoken up until now said, “Shit. I didn’t say anything, though.”

“You were here, you could’ve stopped your friend.” He looked over at us. “You guys will give your statements to the officers here. I don’t want you all in the same place.”

“That’s fine, thank you,” Matt answered.

“Why do we have to go anywhere? We haven’t even eaten!” The originator of the state of affairs pointed to his stomach.

“Shoulda thought of that before you acted like an idiot,” the officer responded in a flat tone. “Now either come peacefully or we’ll cuff you. Your choice.”

“Fine, but you can’t deny me food.”

Now the officer rolled his eyes. “One of the men will bring you something after he’s finished here. Now get moving.”

The guys left and everyone who remained in the dining hall went back to eating. The officers separated us to take our statements, then told us to lay low until the college had made a decision about how to proceed. Since the guys were part of a frat, the officers wanted to be sure no revenge would be enacted by their brothers. They gave us the usual warnings about not walking alone and paying attention to our surroundings. Brady kissed the top of my head and I grinned back at him. The past fifteen minutes represented the most demonstrative he’d ever been in public.

We all gathered back together, and the three of us thanked Matt and his teammates for standing up for us. I was fighting tears, and quickly swiped at my eyes. Brady and Joe looked as ragged as I probably did. All I wanted to do was curl up with my boys and take a nice, long nap.

Delia rushed up to us. “I heard what happened. You all right?”

“We’re fine, thanks to these guys,” Joe said, indicating the soccer players.

“I think you would’ve done just fine on your own, but I told you we’d have your backs,” Matt answered. “I’m just glad we were here, though it seemed like you had a lot of support from other people.”

“We did. I can’t even believe it,” I managed to choke out. I looked at Brady and Joe. “Need to get out of here before I lose it.”

“Yeah, that sounds like a great idea,” Brady said. “You can change your pants and we’ll throw some laundry in.”

Delia spoke. “Y’all want to crash at our place? No one would find you there.”

“We have an off-campus house,” Matt offered. “We’re off today, so it might be a little noisy since twelve of us live there. I like those odds if someone decides to attempt anything stupid, though. They’d have to bring the entire frat with them.”

I turned to Brady and Joe. “What do you guys think?”

“I want to go home,” Brady burst out. “Like home, home. I want to come out to my parents and I want you guys there when I do.”

Joe raised an eyebrow. “Thanksgiving is in a few weeks. Are you sure you don’t want to think about it for a little while, make sure you’re doing the right thing? We’re all on edge. Our emotions are close to the surface. This might not be a good time to make a potentially life-changing decision.”

“I have thought about it, and you guys won’t be with me on Thanksgiving. I need you both there to support me in case it goes badly.”

“If you’re sure that’s what you want, I’ll go with you,” I said. “Of course, neither of us has a car.”

“I’ll go too. I’m the one with the wheels and I don’t trust either of you to drive my baby,” Joe retorted. He addressed Delia and Matt. “Thank you for everything you’ve done for us. Let us know if there’s anything we can do in return.”

“Anything to help a friend.” Matt and Joe exchanged guy-hugs, and after all of us had hugged him and Delia, they left together. The other players were still having statements taken, but they didn’t seem bothered by Matt’s departure.

“Think there might be something there?” Brady jerked his head toward the doors the two had just exited out of.

Joe shrugged. “Could be. Okay, let’s get going. We all have homework, so we can’t be there all day.”

“No way are we escaping without being fed,” Brady warned him.

“I can handle that, and I don’t want to rush you or anything, I’m just worried about getting everything done.”

“I understand, believe me. I have a crap load of assignments waiting for me.” Blowing out a loud breath, Brady said, “Let’s go. First order of business, changing.”

“I second that.”

When we arrived at his parents’ house, they were both home and happy to see us. We all sat in their formal living room, all three together on the couch, but we didn’t touch or do anything else to give us away. As far as his parents knew—for now—we were the good friends Brady had made in Spain.

“Mom, Dad, I have something I need to tell you.”

Brady’s father leaned forward. “Is everything okay?”

“Yes, but there’s something you should know about me. I’m gay.”

His mom gave him a half smile. “Honey, we know. We’ve known for years.”

Throwing up his hands, Brady exclaimed, “Then why didn’t you ever say anything?”

“We were waiting for you to come to us when you were ready.” She shifted in her seat. “Should I surmise you’ve brought home the reason you finally told us? Which of these lucky men has stolen your heart?”

“Um, both of them.”

“Oh,” his dad said. “That’s...”

“Wonderful,” his mom finished. “I’m happy you have such nice, smart men to spend your time with. She winked at us and then said, “And you have good taste, which you obviously got from me. They’re good-looking men.”

“Mom! I can’t believe you just said my boyfriends were hot. Gross.”

Brady’s father cleared his throat, staring down at the floor. He hadn’t said anything besides that awkward few words after Brady admitted we were a threesome. Now he rose.

“I have some work to do. Charts to fill out. I’ll see you before you go.” He still hadn’t looked at Brady, and the urge to hug my guy overwhelmed me. I looked down to find my fingers twitching. I glanced over at Joe, who seemed to be having a similar problem. His father left the room, and Brady’s expression crumbled. Joe and I shot up from the couch and put our arms around him.

“It’ll be okay. Maybe he just needs time to process,” I said. “My dad is coming around, but it’s taken a little while.”

“You must stay for a late lunch,” his mother said. We all pulled away from each other, blushing. Apparently I wasn’t the only one who’d completely forgotten she was still there.

“We had brunch at school before coming here—” Brady started.

“We would love to, thank you,” Joe spoke over him.

Brady turned to Joe. “Why did you do that? Obviously my dad’s not cool with this.”

“And how can he become more comfortable if he never sees the three of us interact and realize we’re all just normal guys? Well, for the most part. We’ll have some food, stay for a little while, act like the friends we are, and then go back to school.”

Brady looked at me. “Are you okay with staying?”

“I’m fine with whatever you want to do. If you really think you should leave, we will, but Joe’s right. In fact, we should probably do this at my house, too. My dad’s an old-fashioned guy. He never condemned me, but he’s admitted he doesn’t understand homosexuality. Maybe if he saw the three of us together, just acting friendly like Joe’s suggesting, he’d see we’re not having some non-stop porno party in our suite.”

“Does he know about both of us?”

“My mom does. She’s cool. She just wants me to be happy. I never actually told my dad we were all together, but I’m guessing he put two and two together. That might be what’s really bothering him.”

Brady’s mom appeared. “How spicy do you boys like your food?”

I spoke first. “My stomach is not a huge fan of a lot of spice, but I do like some.”

“I can handle whatever,” Joe answered with a grin.

“Great. Give me about fifteen minutes. Just need to heat a few dishes up.”

“You guys know she’s going to put out enough food to feed all of UVB, right?” Brady asked. “The woman has no concept of a small meal.”

“I’m surprised you were so skinny when we met you, then,” Joe remarked.

“I guess my metabolism is still pretty fast.” He shrugged. “As you can see, though, both of my parents are thin. So are my sister and brother.”

“Where are they?” I asked. “Don’t they live here?”

“Yeah, but on Saturdays my sister rehearses with a county-wide choir, and my brother’s only eight, so he’s probably out with friends. He wasn’t planned.” Brady chuckled. “My mom’s face when she told us she was having another

baby was priceless. Meghan's only three and a half years younger than me, but Abi, the only one of us who ended up with an Indian name, is thirteen years younger. It was sort of weird having a newborn in the house when I was starting high school."

Conversation lagged for a few minutes as we became lost in our own thoughts. I startled when my phone vibrated in my pocket. I took it out, finding a text from Delia.

Call or text me when you have a minute. Nothing bad, just an update.

I quickly thumbed a response before tucking my phone away.

Still at Brady's. Should be back on the road in 90 or so. Will call then.

His mom came back to gather us. Brady hadn't been kidding. The kitchen counters were laden with food, and Brady laughed. "Mom, how many of us did you think were here? Are you seeing double?"

Lightly smacking him on the arm, she replied. "You need good food, not the things they feed you in that horrible dining hall."

"The dining hall is actually pretty good."

"But it's not my cooking." She grinned as she pinched him on the cheek.

He swatted her hand away, rolling his eyes. "When are you going to stop doing that?"

"When I die."

There'd been no sign of Brady's dad since he'd mentioned work. Well, maybe he'd join us and could see how much we loved each other, but also that we were best friends.

Friendship lay at the heart of everything we did, everything we were. Yes, we had sex a lot, but what else would you expect from three healthy, horny college guys? Take that away, though, and our relationship still had a solid foundation, despite our recent problems.

We ate as much as we could, and ended up with several containers to take back with us. Luckily, the suite had a fridge in the lounge and much of what Brady's mom pushed on us was non-perishable. When she'd produced a box of what looked like fried dough balls with some kind of topping, I eagerly grabbed that.

Brady laughed. “Those will be gone by the time we get back to school. Trevor loves sweets.”

“Hey, they’re bite-sized!” I protested.

“I’ll make more and mail them to you,” his mother promised. “I’m happy you could all come today. I miss my boy when he’s away.”

“Mo-om!”

Laughing, his mom gave each of us a hug. When she and Brady embraced, she whispered something in his ear and he nodded, then she kissed both of his cheeks. Before we left, Brady’s dad finally emerged.

“I cannot pretend to understand your situation.”

“I know,” Brady answered. “I wouldn’t expect you to.”

His father sighed, tugging on his ear. “This is not how I was raised, but your mother and I came to America for a reason. We wanted you to have a better life than we would have if we’d remained in India. If that life includes things I don’t understand, I will do my best to make peace with your decisions. I want you to be happy. If these men do that, who am I to forbid it? You’re old enough to know your own heart. I married your mother when I was nineteen and she’d just turned seventeen. No one told me we were too young, or that we were wrong, and I don’t have the right to do that either. I just wish—” he gestured with his hands, and we all waited, “—I wish this choice would not make your life harder, though I fear it will.”

If he only knew.

“Father, I am grateful for everything you and Mom have done for me. You’ve given all of your children every chance to succeed. And I am. I’m on the Dean’s List at school, and though you may not understand why I love Trevor and Joe so much, they do make me happy. Yes, things may not be as easy for us as for a heterosexual couple, but they’re worth it.”

Brady’s father extended a hand to me. “Take care of my boy.”

“Every day, with every breath,” I replied with a solemn nod.

He turned to Joe.

“You have my word, sir. Your son and Trevor are the most important things to me and I will do whatever—whatever I have to, no matter what—to give them the best lives I can.”

“Thank you.” Now Brady’s dad came forward and kissed both his cheeks. “Be well, my son, and be safe. We will see you in a few weeks for Thanksgiving.”

“We will speak while you’re gone,” his mother promised. “And make sure your sister and brother know your situation and will not judge you.”

“Thank you. You’ve been the best parents anyone could hope for.”

Brady was choking up, and Joe and I shared a glance. Both of us clearly wanted to comfort him, but we weren’t sure how his parents would take it. Our decision was taken away from us, though, when Brady turned, putting his arms around both of us and burying his head between ours.

“We should go, bud,” Joe said. “Homework awaits.”

“Okay,” he answered, his voice muffled in my shirt. His parents walked us out to Joe’s truck, with me and the food in the back so Brady could stretch out his long legs and Joe could drive. As we pulled away, he said, “They aren’t as good with this as they’re acting. In India you’re brought up to keep things within the family.” He blew out a breath. “Hopefully by the time Thanksgiving rolls around, they’ll have accepted it, but I really have no idea what to expect.”

Joe made a right onto the ramp to the freeway. “It could’ve gone far worse.”

“Yeah. Even if they were faking things for us, I think they’re not as freaked as you seem to. Your mom said they suspected.”

“Suspecting and knowing are two different things.”

“Of course, but at least you know you didn’t blindsides them. That counts for something. No matter how deeply they may or may not have tried to bury their suspicions, their brains hadn’t forgotten. So now you can go from there. I really believe it’ll be okay,” I finished, leaning forward to squeeze his shoulders.

He turned his head and kissed me. “I love both of you so much.”

“Good, ’cause you’re not getting rid of us,” Joe said, and Brady smiled, though his lips trembled a bit.

“Wouldn’t have it any other way.”

A few days later, the two frat members went before the college’s disciplinary committee. The three of us each testified, as did Matt and some of the onlookers. The frat guys had painted themselves as the victims of a setup to

make them look bad, but from what I could tell, the committee wasn't buying it, especially once the videos began to play, one right after the other, all taken from different angles so it was easy to see the frat guys' facial expressions and body language.

"We'll reconvene back here at eleven A.M. with our decision," the head of the committee, who was also the dean of student affairs, said, and we waited until the frat guys and their brothers had left the room before rising. A wall of people surrounded us as if we were rock stars or something.

The guy who'd done the talking sulked on a bench several feet away, but the other one wrung his hands and paced. In some ways I felt sorry for him, but the officer was right. He could've stopped the tirade at any time, but made no move to, and seemed to enjoy his friend hurling insults at us.

"Don't pay any attention to them," Delia told me, grabbing my shoulders and physically turning both of us away from the frat guys. "They're screwed and they know it."

We sat around for a while and after what seemed like an eternity, everyone got called back inside.

"We've reached a decision. Brian Hopkins, please stand." The ringleader stood, his face stoic. "You are hereby expelled from UVB, no chance for appeal, under section three, subtitle 4.1. That section, in case you don't have your student handbook, deals with the consequences of harassing or discriminating against any LGBT student. You have twenty-four hours to remove yourself and all your belongings." Brian didn't say anything, but scowled and sat, crossing his arms over his chest. "Niles J. Whitaker, please stand." Niles? Did his parents want him to get beaten up on the playground? Were they obsessed with the river? Eesh. "You are suspended from UVB, effective immediately, for the remainder of the semester. You may complete courses through special arrangements with your professors. In January, you will be allowed to write a letter asking for readmission and we will assess the situation again."

"Thank you, sir." Niles dropped into his chair, his face white against his dress shirt.

"I hope you've all learned something. The entire university code of conduct was built to be an inclusive atmosphere and behavior such as this will not be tolerated. Case closed."

The committee left the room, and we all milled around for a few minutes, thanking people for taking the time to come to our defense both that day and now. The frat members and their brothers had fled the premises at the earliest possible opportunity. I couldn't blame them. The entire fraternity had been harmed because of the actions of a few, though I suspected if more brothers had been there the refrain would've been the same.

Joe slung an arm around each of us. "Let's go home."

"I still need to move back in," Brady reminded him after we'd said our good-byes and headed for the door.

"Eh, we'll do it later."

Brady cocked his head. "Exactly how many hours do you think there are in a day?"

"Not enough. Never enough. Now we'd better vamoose back to the suite so we can have some private time fun since this is over."

I wasn't naïve enough to believe this would be the end of our troubles; we all realized the situation we'd put ourselves in. But with the three of us as a united front, plus the ever-increasing number of members in the Gay-Straight Alliance, we finally felt like we could let out a breath we'd been collectively holding. These men were it for me, and after Brady bought all three of us "engagement rings" that Christmas, I fell in love with both of my guys even more.

The End

Author Bio

Cassandra Carr is a romance and action adventure writer whose work has been praised by many prominent publishing industry media outlets such as Publisher's Weekly and Romantic Times. Her books have won several "Best Of" awards. Her novella Power Shift was nominated in the E-book Erotic Romance category of RT's 2013 Reviewers' Choice Awards. When not writing she enjoys watching hockey and hanging out online.

She thinks the best part of being a writer is how she writes about love and sex while most others struggle with daily commutes, micro-managing bosses and cranky co-workers. Her inspiration comes from everywhere, but she'd particularly like to thank the Buffalo Sabres, the hockey team near and dear to her heart.

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