



AFTER THE
RAIN

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Dedication

For my husband, my real-life Logan.

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Chapter One

Preston Carter looked the same as he always had—tall, dark and slim in his designer suit. Like Henri’s cheating ex, the apartment behind him was similarly unchanged. The place was still gorgeous, with shades of tan and gold painted to contrast with the chrome accents on Preston’s furniture. Henri remembered exactly which color had been chosen to match what, since Preston had fought tooth and nail against Henri’s interior-design choices.

Too bad all Preston’s money hadn’t bought him taste.

“Thanks for finally deigning to show up,” Preston snapped, letting Henri in the door.

“You’re welcome, chéri.” Venom dripped from Henri’s voice. He set his backpack near the entrance, since Preston would give Henri a hard time if he brought anything into the pristine two-bedroom penthouse.

Henri tried not to be jealous. He’d be earning a full-time wage soon. Maybe he wouldn’t be able to afford a penthouse, but he’d get his own place. God, he was such an idiot for having insisted on paying Preston rent. If he’d saved up instead, he would have signed a lease on a new apartment by now instead of sleeping on his best friend’s couch.

He put a little sway in his step as he sauntered into the apartment. Six in the afternoon was early for a booty call, but he was hoping that was why Preston had asked him to come over. As much as Henri hated Preston for cheating, he missed the way Preston’s ass looked in Armani.

“So.” He took his time rotating, letting Preston see the goods. Henri had worn his skintight black jeans, the ones that left absolutely nothing to the imagination, and a T-shirt that was ripped artistically enough not to be completely slutty. He must have lost ten pounds in those days right after the breakup when all he could do was cry and watch television. Confidence swelled his chest and parts lower on his body when Henri spotted himself, looking heroin chic, in Preston’s wall mirror. “You wanted to see me?”

“Well, yes.” Preston rushed into his spare bedroom—the one where Henri’s desk had been when Henri still lived here. He came out with a small pile. Schoolbooks, a shirt Henri wasn’t even sure was his and a picture Henri’d had framed of the two of them together. Preston held them out, his face devoid of emotion. “Here.”

Henri took them, his gaze on the picture. They’d been at an art gallery, and Henri was laughing. The pain of seeing it hit him like a bullet to the heart. “You’re giving this back to me?”

“I thought you might want the frame.”

The deadpan way Preston said it, Henri didn’t know if he was serious, sarcastic or trying to be hurtful.

Henri set the stuff down, picked up the picture and walked into Preston’s kitchen to throw it in the trash.

“Well, that’s mature.” Preston followed behind him. “I’m surprised you didn’t smash it on the ground in a temper tantrum. That’s more your style, right?”

Henri’s eyes filled with tears, but he wiped them away before Preston could see. He hated Preston so fucking much because despite all the crap Preston had put him through, Henri still wanted him in the worst way.

How in the hell was Henri supposed to move on? A whole year they’d been together, and all Henri had to show for it was a storage locker full of shit and mooching off Michael for his last month of college. That, and the occasional booty call.

“Was there any other reason you invited me over?” Henri gathered his strength, sniffing the moisture out of his nose and hoping his face hadn’t gotten too red. He turned to lean against the counter.

“Well, in fact, yes.” Preston’s eyes darted to the side. “I have to tell you something, but I’m warning you in advance—*do not* throw one of your tizzy fits, because it’s not a big deal.”

“Okay.” A window above the sink overlooked a garden at the center of Preston’s apartment complex, but otherwise the whole kitchen was steel and concrete. Henri wished they were doing this in the living room, where soft surfaces would dull the noise if Preston shouted. As it was, Henri stepped into the corner, between the fridge and Preston’s butcher block.

“I’ve contracted HSV2,” Preston said in clipped tones.

At first, all Henri heard was *contract* and some letters, so he thought Preston was talking about a business deal. Preston had always done that—sprung terminology on Henri to show him how useless Henri’s economics major would prove in the real world. Henri wracked his mind for the meaning. *H...S...V... Wait...*

Oh fuck.

“You mean herpes?” Henri’s belly tensed like he’d fallen twenty feet. He was glad he had a grip on the butcher block because his legs wobbled.

“Like the STI?”

Oh my God, when was the last time we fucked? We always used condoms, but... Henri’s mind went blank, panic hitting hard.

“Yes. Herpes Simplex 2. It’s very common. Twenty percent of adults...” Preston launched into a monologue like he was reading from a pamphlet. The words *transmission rates* and *seroconversion* were in there, knocking other scary concepts like *health insurance* and *paying taxes* down a peg in Henri’s list of *Most Terrifying Things Ever*.

“Are you serious?” Henri hissed. Talk about the worst graduation present ever. “Did you give it to me? Is that what you’re saying?”

“No.” Preston ran a hand through his highlighted and perfectly styled hair, the most frazzled Henri had seen him. “Probably not.”

“Probably not.” Henri pressed his forefinger and thumb into his eyes, watching spots dance behind his eyelids. “Then why—?”

“I thought you should know.” Haughtily, Preston looked down his Roman nose. “You may want to get tested. If you do get lesions, I figured you’d want to know what they are.”

“Lesions?” Henri focused his awareness on lower parts of his body, the parts that were currently sucking into his groin and trembling in fear. Was that tingling he felt? He knew tingling and itching were the first signs.

He scratched his balls through his jeans. Okay, he did itch a little, but maybe that was because he hadn’t had a chance to groom lately. Michael complained if Henri took more than five minutes in the shower.

Henri gathered his strength so he wouldn’t turn into a simpering, weeping mess. He couldn’t fucking handle this, not with finals and everything else. “So, why do I probably not have it? Because I know you were fucking around before you broke it off with me.”

“Oh my God, you bitch. I’m sick of you bringing that up.” Preston slammed his hand on the counter and used every inch of height he had on Henri to seem intimidating.

Henri shrank farther into his spot of relative safety, twisting his hips behind the wood of the rolling butcher block. Experience had shown it didn’t do any good to talk to Preston when he was like this.

“Our last encounter was over two weeks ago.” Preston tossed his head back so his hair ruffled on his forehead.

Had it been that long? Henri had been so busy scrambling for a place to stay that he hadn’t realized. No wonder Michael was getting on Henri’s last nerve with his control-freak rules. Michael was probably upping his annoying factor to get Henri to take the hint and move out.

“So, there’s no way you could have given it to me?”

“My doctor said the prodromal phase is ten days.”

Henri’s pulse beat in his temple. “What does that mean?”

Preston snorted, like he thought Henri was an idiot. “Since we had sex more than ten days before I was symptomatic, and we used condoms, it’s very unlikely you contracted it.”

“Unlikely?” Henri held the word tight to his chest, trying to figure out what it meant. Less likely than *certain*, more likely than *not*?

“So, what about Jayson?” Henri wasn’t thrilled with the man now taking up the other half of Preston’s king-sized, memory-foam bed, but he didn’t hate the guy. As far as he was concerned, Preston was the cheater.

“He hadn’t had an outbreak in years.”

The words sank in—Preston had known Jayson had the virus and had taken Henri to bed anyway.

Henri gasped like Preston had punched him.

He’d trusted Preston, thought of him as the grownup in their relationship. Preston may not have always been nice, but he was supposed to make the smart decisions so Henri wouldn’t have to worry.

If lightning had struck, Henri wouldn’t have noticed. Betrayal brought tears to his eyes, sliced through to his heart. He pushed Preston out of the way.

“Jesus, Hen.” Preston caught him by the arm. He glared down at Henri as if somehow all of this was Henri’s fault. “Don’t go running out to do anything stupid.”

“The only stupid thing I’ve done here is wasting a year of my life on you.” Henri broke away and made it halfway down the hall before he realized Preston wasn’t chasing him. Preston always had before—every time Henri stormed out of the apartment.

By the time Henri was a block away, walking on shaking legs, he realized why Preston hadn’t bothered. Things between them were really over.

Henri collapsed on the bench at the bus stop, dropping his swollen backpack to the ground. City traffic streamed by, and the sun shined. Birds chirped on the crisp spring evening, as if the whole city were celebrating the end of the school year while Henri got thrown under the wheels of a bus.

He dragged a deep breath in, ignoring the smell of exhaust and focusing instead on the freshly cut grass. He blew out until his lungs were empty and his heartbeat slowed to a reasonable thrum. Henri needed to come up with a plan.

Call the health center, sign up, get tested.

Once he found out the results... Well, after that, he’d figure out what came next.

“That is such bullshit.” Soleil marched across her apartment, the apartment they’d shared when they first moved to Seattle. “You know damn well that men don’t suddenly ‘*turn*’ gay.” She used air quotes, bottom lip thrust forward in a pout. Funny, that pout and that attitude had been the things about her that turned Logan on when they were first together. He wished like hell he could still muster the energy to find her cute.

“It’s not bullshit.” Paying more attention than strictly needed, Logan shoved his firefighting manuals on top of the rest of his books. “It’s somethin’ I’d been thinkin’ about for a while. You know that.”

“I know you say you like dick. You moved out like you were going to live some queer lifestyle. Four months later, babe, and where’s the beef?” She shook her head, scoffing. “You ain’t done shit with a man.”

He kept his growl to a minimum, letting it escape through his nose like a dragon breathing out fire. “Not sure why you care.” Angrily, he folded the top of the box and started packing the next one.

He should have known she would lay into him the first chance she got. No wonder she'd been bugging him for weeks to come pick up the last of his textbooks. Since he'd gone through training all over again in Seattle, Logan could have done without his TEEEX Fire Recruit Academy stuff. And he certainly could have done without his lack of a sex life being dissected by his ex-girlfriend. "I haven't had time."

It was bad enough Soleil had kept all the furniture they'd brought up from Texas when they'd moved—he hadn't asked for his parents' old couch back, and it still lay in the middle of her living room, across from the big-screen TV Logan had put on his credit card—but he didn't get why she demanded his balls in a sling every time she saw him.

He'd apologized a hundred times and hadn't asked for his half of the security deposit back...why couldn't she let it go?

A man's sweater was draped over the couch's armrest, so clearly she was seeing someone else. It wasn't any of her business where he stuck his dick.

Calmly as he could, Logan taped the first box closed. "I'll be out of here in a second." He grabbed another row of books off the shelf, high school yearbooks he'd want to toss in the recycling bin if it wasn't for the pictures of him and Soleil at prom. Someday, he might want those memories, even though at the moment he could have gone the rest of his life without laying eyes on her again.

"Yeah. Whatever." Soleil's voice broke as she turned away. Her shoulders trembled under her dark curls, and her head hung forward like she was crying.

"You okay?" He couldn't tell if this was another one of her mood swings, but he'd never been able to handle seeing her cry. Hit by a fresh rush of guilt, he rose out of his crouch and touched her shoulder. Her flesh was soft under his hand, and she smelled familiar—like a bouquet of flowers picked from his mom's garden. Logan wanted to sob right along with her.

"Yeah." She wiped her face with the back of her hand. With the mocha color of her skin, her face didn't redden, not even when she cried, but her nose and eyes were puffy. "I'm fine."

She dropped to her knees and rearranged the books on the shelves, filling in the empty spaces left by his stuff. "But you know, if you didn't want to be with me, you could have just said it. You didn't have to come up with this whole *gay* thing as a cover." She grabbed a vase off a higher shelf and

placed it where the firefighting manuals had been. She didn't bother to dust first. "I'm a big girl." Soleil sniffed away the last of her tears, her voice stuffy. "I can handle the truth. If you didn't love me—"

"Of course I loved you." Logan rubbed his face in frustration. They'd had this conversation too many fucking times already. He was sick of it. "I still do." He reached for her, but she pulled away, striding out of the living room and into the kitchen.

"Whatever." She must have turned on the sink faucet because the sound of water running filled the apartment. "But I'll ask again—if you think you're gay, why haven't you done anything about it?"

"I'm not twenty-one yet." He ran packing tape across the top of the second box. "I can't go to bars." Truth was he was scared shitless. The gay guys he saw around town were all sleek and hip, with their noses in the air. Logan didn't know how to talk to any of them much less ask for a date.

Logan knew one gay guy, but they worked together. Tomas was hot, though. Friendly, usually smiling. Maybe Logan should man up and ask him out.

"Like that matters." Soleil came back from the kitchen with a glass of water. For a second, Logan thought she'd brought it for him since he was parched, but then she drank it in one swallow. "I'd think if you really were gay, you'd have a boyfriend by now. Or maybe three or four of them. After all the time I wasted dating you—"

"I'm sorry, okay?" he ended up shouting, and Logan cleared his throat to lower his voice. He hated losing his temper, but they'd had this argument too many times to count. He was done. Finished. He was gay, and he didn't want to date Soleil or any other girl. Hell, he didn't want to date anyone ever again. "It doesn't matter what I've done. I'm not straight, and I'm sorry I didn't know that when we got together, but, Jesus, I was fifteen!"

She snorted her disagreement, her arms crossed and her posture tense. Thankfully she didn't fight back. She could have pointed out that was five years ago, and that Logan had had plenty of time to figure out he was gay in the time in between.

Soleil didn't say any of it because she didn't need to. She'd said it all before.

Box packed, he stood. At six-three he towered over her five-foot-five frame, and the distance between them had never seemed farther.

“I wish I didn’t hate you so much. I really do.” Soleil glared up at him with red-rimmed eyes. She went into her bedroom—the bedroom they’d shared when they were together—and slammed the door.

The sound hung in the air while Logan let out a shaky breath.

Never again. Relationships were more trouble than they were worth. Anyway, it was pretty fucking obvious he sucked as a boyfriend.

He set his key on the table by the door, and without saying goodbye, he carried his boxes into the hall.

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Chapter Two

I'm gay. I am a gay man. This is perfectly normal...

Logan glanced down the hall at his coworker. The attic was an empty shell, burnt out and smoky, but at least they were the only two guys there. Logan tried to work up the guts to say something. Quick, before any of the other guys came upstairs.

“Need some more?” Tomas held up a roll of duct tape, oblivious to Logan’s racing thoughts.

“Yeah. Uh, that would be great.” Logan pushed his helmet up to wipe the sweat off his forehead. The fire was out, but pieces of drywall were caved in in places, and light fixtures hung halfway off the walls, as if any minute they might drop on some unsuspecting claims adjuster. Logan stepped around a section of rubble to get to Tomas’s side.

“Here.” Tomas tossed him the tape when they were still a few steps apart. He went back to stretching thick sheets of plastic across sections where the charring was deep enough to leave exposed beams, not paying any attention to Logan still standing a few feet away.

“Thanks.” Logan cleared his throat and let the interaction hover for a bit to see if Tomas would take the bait.

His effort worked because Tomas lowered the plastic sheeting, cocking his eyebrows up in question. “Yeah?”

Thank sweet heaven it was drizzling outside. Between all his gear and the heat creeping up his chin, Logan would have been sweating like a pig if he were still back in Texas.

“I was... Well, I was just wonderin’...if you’re free tomorrow after work...or, y’know, some other time. If you’ll be too tired...” He stared at his boots, the same way he had probably done the first time he asked a girl out in junior high. At least back then he’d had his whole crew of friends behind him, spurring him on. Now it was just him, feeling like a dumbass.

Logan wished he’d gone to a club. Or one of those parks he’d heard about where you could meet a stranger and trade blowjobs. Maybe he’d

suck at it—or not suck, since he'd never given one before—but this tension made kissing a stranger seem easy. With a guy he didn't know, Logan wouldn't have to deal with him after.

Too bad the words were already out there. His pulse beat in his ears worse than elevator Muzak while he waited for Tomas's answer.

"You need a favor, or are you asking me out?" Tomas chuckled, a sound that was kindhearted enough to make Logan feel a little bit better.

He forced himself to look Tomas in the eye. "I just wondered if you might like to go out for breakfast." *Or trade blowjobs*, his mind filled in. Damn dirty mind. Logan wished it would shut the hell up sometimes. "Only if you wanna." Logan grabbed the push broom for something to hold on to. If he was sweeping, he'd have an excuse to nail his attention to the floor.

Tomas's expression was gentle, but Logan knew from the purse of his lips that he was going to say no. "I'm really flattered." He patted Logan on the arm. "But I have a boyfriend."

"Oh." Logan supposed it could have been worse. Tomas could have laughed in his face or told him to go to hell. Checking the stairs, Logan made sure none of the other guys were going to burst in on them. "Yeah, that's cool," he muttered. "Just, uh, don't tell the guys or anything, okay?"

He felt like the world's biggest pussy, asking Tomas out and then asking him not to tell, but being gay was bad enough. Being gay and unable to land a date? He might never live it down.

"No worries." With another one of those easygoing grins, Tomas gave Logan a mock punch, kind of like Tomas was his older brother, which—given the thoughts Logan had had about the guy recently—was pretty weird. "I'll keep it on the down low." Tomas got back to work hanging plastic in an empty doorway.

The air reeked of char and chemicals, and the only light came from a lamp run by a generator on the floor. All the power was out, leaving the house unnaturally quiet.

Tomas whistled, as if none of this had happened, which was probably his attempt to be cool and give Logan space. In this case, though, Logan wished Tomas were more of a busybody. Even if they weren't going to go out, Logan could have used a gay friend, especially a gay friend in his battalion.

"So. You've lived here your whole life?" Logan pushed a broomful of rubble into a pile and grabbed the dustpan.

“Yeah.” Tomas shrugged, not taking his eyes off his work. It didn’t seem like a brush-off, not with the friendly way Tomas rolled his shoulders. “Down in the South End.”

Logan poured the dustpan full of chunks and ash into one of the giant black garbage bags. “I wonder sometimes if it was a good move comin’ up here.” Most days, Logan was happy he’d followed Soleil north, even if their relationship had crashed and burned shortly after the move. He’d needed to get out of Wichita Falls, with its churches and football culture and all the things that had kept him from admitting he was gay for so long. But some days he wondered if he should have stuck closer to home. He’d heard Austin was cool. Liberal and queer friendly.

“Nah. You’ll love it here after a while.” Tomas came over, sweeping bits into the dustpan Logan held. “The rain’s only really bad in the winter, and it’s gorgeous July through September. Just wait...” His eyes lit up like he’d thought of something. “Hey, you like camping?”

Logan got a sweet little rush of hope. No one had asked him to do anything since he got to town six months ago—unless he counted the time he’d gone for beers with guys from work. “Yeah. I love campin’.”

“There’s a group trip to Whistler this weekend. It’s a queer thing. Me, my boyfriend and some of his buddies from school are going.”

That wasn’t exactly an invite, not the way Logan had been raised to express hospitality, but it seemed like Tomas was asking him to go.

“You have a passport, right?” Tomas pulled a glove off to scratch the back of his neck.

“Oh. Yeah.” Logan had gotten one a few years back when he’d gone with his parents to Mexico. Man, he’d be excited as hell to get a chance to use it again.

“Great. Canada’s awesome.” Tomas took the broom into the bathroom, which was open to the rest of the loft space they were cleaning. They’d had to chop down the door to get to the candle that started the fire.

“I hear British Columbia is gorgeous. Do I have to sign up online or somethin’?” Logan pictured stopping by a bookstore after work and picking up a guidebook to BC. He’d only see the highway and wherever they went camping, but Logan still wanted to get a feel for his first solo trip out of the country.

“Nah, I’ll let Michael know you’re coming.” Tomas ripped off another stretch of tape and covered the broken shower stall. “You won’t need a ride, right? Because my truck only seats two.”

“No. I’ll drive.” His grin spread so wide Logan bet he’d have sore cheeks by the end of his shift. Shit, this was really happening. Logan could get to know some new people, maybe hook up during a cookout. There’d probably be guys there looking for a little casual, friendly sex in the great outdoors. It would be like summer camp, except Logan wouldn’t feel pressured to raid the girls’ cabins. “Sounds great.”

“Cool.” Tomas stopped what he was doing and peered over his shoulder to give Logan an appraising once-over. “Hey, what kind of guys do you like?”

Logan swallowed, embarrassed. Up until five minutes ago he’d thought he liked Tomas. Truth was, beggars couldn’t be choosers. Logan would have made out with just about any guy to get over his fear of it. “Dark hair.” He considered what he liked about Tomas and those things that had attracted him to Soleil. “Smaller than me.” That was a stupid-ass answer. Logan was built so big he towered over just about everyone.

He supposed he liked guys who were...different maybe? Exotic? That was what they called it on the porn sites Logan liked to frequent. Well, when they weren’t using horrible racial stereotypes.

But Logan didn’t want to come right out and say it. Tomas was Latino. Logan didn’t know if calling Tomas *exotic* was offensive. It probably was. Maybe *foreign* was a better way to put it, but Logan didn’t want to come out and say that either, so he just asked, “Why?”

Tomas pressed his lips together in a smirk. “Jesse’s got this friend Henri. He broke up with someone a few weeks ago.”

The name pricked Logan’s interest, but the rest of the guy sounded like a big red flag. “A guy on the rebound?” Logan didn’t want to offend Tomas, but hooking up with someone who’d recently gotten out of a relationship sounded like a horrible idea.

Not like Logan could talk. He would have gotten laid the night he moved out of Soleil’s place if he’d had the guts to go to a gay bar.

“Would I set you up with a basket case?” Tomas went back to work, layering plastic over missing walls. “Henri broke up with a real douche bag. I bet he’s looking for any excuse to get laid.”

Logan's blood rushed to his groin so fast he bit his lip to stop from groaning. Shit, maybe rebound guy was worth meeting after all. If nothing else, Logan bet Tomas's friend wasn't looking to date anyone for a while.

"Sounds great." Logan swept his way closer to Tomas, trying to keep casual when in his mind he was picturing ways to get into rebound guy's pants. "I'm sure Henri is a sweetheart."

The gray pavement of Costco's parking lot blended right in with the heavy cloud cover, and despite it being late May, the temperature hovered in the low sixties. At least it wasn't raining. Logan wasn't really outfitted for damp weather since the news had said they'd have a typical Northwest Memorial Day weekend.

Logan figured that meant sun. He hoped like hell he wasn't wrong.

Though the sky at that moment could have passed for winter in Texas, half the people in the lot wore shorts. There were a lot of shoppers too, enough to fill every space within a quarter mile of the warehouse doors. Half of Seattle was stocking up for the three-day weekend.

Logan pulled in next to Tomas and climbed out. When his door refused to shut, Logan slammed it a couple of times. He hoped his old girl made it to Canada and back without anything major falling off, because his credit card was still reeling from the move to Seattle. No way could he handle any surprise repairs if he was going to pay it off by Christmas.

"Hey." Tomas leaned against the side of his own truck—a tricked-out Dodge that couldn't have been more than five years old—and pointed at a couple guys hauling luggage from the bus stop out by the road.

Tomas had shown Logan a cell-phone picture of his boyfriend, so Logan recognized the fairer of the two guys right away. Medium height and narrow-shouldered, Tomas's boyfriend Jesse was the type of kid Logan had gotten more than a few bruises defending in high school. Jesse's sandy hair hung in his eyes, marking him as gay even from a distance. He struggled under the weight of the duffel hitched over his shoulder, like his slim muscles were taxed by the load.

He seemed sweet, soft and easy. Not sex-wise, necessarily, but the type of guy to be swept off his feet by Tomas's handsome winks and impressive ride. That wasn't a bad thing, but Logan could tell, even without knowing

him, that Jesse wasn't his type. Weird, because he still didn't know much about his preferences, but Logan was sure of one thing—he wasn't into helpless guys.

Logan hoped the dark-haired guy Jesse was with didn't care about fancy cars because Logan's truck wasn't going to be winning any beauty awards. The back door was still painted a shade that didn't match the faded red of the rest of the body. She still drove great, but with over two hundred thousand miles on her engine, she coughed a bit on an incline.

“See? Told you Jesse'd get Henri to come.” Tomas jutted his chin at the guys. “Henri's cute, right?”

They neared so Logan could make out Henri's face, and Logan practically choked on a swallow of Seattle's damp air. Henri wasn't just cute, he was fucking gorgeous. Long androgynous face, thick eyelashes, bow-shaped mouth. All in black, Henri's clothes were so tight Logan could practically make out his package.

And if his features weren't enough to make him a slam dunk in the looks department, Henri's hair and eyes were dark while his skin was the palest shade of olive. Foreign? Henri could have been from another planet, much less another country. He moved in a graceful glide, rolling his carry-on suitcase behind him.

The guy seemed wild, dangerous. Like he'd take a stranger home and fuck him all night.

Logan had never fucked anyone but Soleil, but he'd always had a thing for, as his mom put it, *the wrong kind of girl*.

“Hey.” Jesse smiled at his boyfriend, dropping his duffel bag to the ground. “What's up?”

“Hey, *mi amor*.” Tomas grinned. “This is Logan MacDonald.” He gestured, making introductions. “Logan—Jesse Smith and Henri Serre.”

Logan cleared his throat, trying to stammer out words. He'd finished top of his class at TEEEX and gotten hired younger than practically any other firefighter in Seattle—he should damn well be able to handle talking to a few queer...he meant *gay*...men.

“Howdy.” Logan nodded Henri's way, hands in his pockets and doing his best to look suave.

Henri raised one severe eyebrow. “I take it you're from out of town?” He glanced at Logan's boots before dragging his gaze up Logan's jeans, over

his shirt and finally to his head where Henri smirked at his hat. “Or are you on your way to a costume party?”

If they weren't in a parking lot surrounded by people, Logan might have grabbed Henri by the front of his tight-fitting shirt and dared him to say that shit again. As it was, he kept his hands fisted in his pockets and ground his teeth together to hold back his growl.

“Henri, man. Don't be a dick.” Tomas shoved Henri in the arm. The smile on his face said he thought Henri was being funny, instead of an asshole. “Logan moved here six months ago. We work in the same battalion.”

“Oh, well I'll try and cut him some slack then.” Henri gave Jesse and Tomas a sneaky smile that Logan assumed was supposed to be cute. He may have showered a little of it Logan's way too, or maybe that twitch of his mouth was meant to be an apology, but Logan was too pissed to care.

“So, who are you riding with?” Henri asked the air near Logan's head. His breezy, sarcastic voice didn't have a French accent, exactly. More like a hint, or a suggestion of one. The sound of it tingled down Logan's spine to tickle his balls.

“I'm drivin'.” Logan leaned against his Bronco's hood, narrowing his eyes. “How are you gettin' up there?” Yeah, it was a challenge, but Logan didn't give a shit. Henri didn't have a car, so he was in no position to criticize Logan's.

“I'm riding with Michael, right?” Henri looked to Tomas for direction. Tomas shrugged. “Really? I thought he already left.”

Henri's skin paled, milky against the longer strands of his hair. Those big, dark eyes widened so he seemed about five years younger. “When?”

“This afternoon. Did you talk to him?”

Henri bit the edge of his fingernail, his big-city attitude dropping as he darted a nervous glance around the evening parking lot. Maybe he still hoped his friend Michael would show up and save him. “No.”

“He sent out that email this morning asking if anyone needed a ride.” Jesse's face was pinched and guilty. “Didn't you see it?”

Henri pressed his finger and thumb into his eyes. “No. Maybe. Shit...” Even if Henri was a dick, he'd brought his suitcase all the way to Costco on the bus. Logan would feel bad for him if Henri had to turn around and head home.

“I can give you a ride.” Logan braced himself to receive the sharp edge of Henri’s tongue. That’s why he was surprised at Henri’s grateful smile.

He would have smiled back, but Henri gave Logan’s Bronco a nervous and not-altogether-positive once-over. “Er... Yeah. Okay. I guess.”

Jesus fucking Christ. Henri crouched to get a sweater from his bag, and more importantly, the cigarettes out of his pocket. Hands shaking, he popped one between his lips.

His preliminary test had been negative at the health center that morning—thank sweet God in heaven above, and Henri was totally going back to church as soon as possible—but he’d been informed he needed to get tested again in three to six weeks since seroconversion so soon after exposure was rare. With the stress of that hanging over his head, Henri wasn’t up to entertaining a complete stranger for five hours.

“Warnin’ you now, no smokin’ in my truck,” Logan said in a voice that was quiet but firm.

“I’ll try and remember that.” Imperiously, Henri flicked on a lighter and sucked in a drag. The paper crinkled as it burned, and the ember flashed red right before a soothing rush of nicotine sizzled through Henri’s bloodstream. If Logan was watching him, Henri did his best to ignore it. Something about the giant, blond-haired, blue-eyed cowboy rubbed Henri the wrong way.

“We should start shopping.” Tomas’s eyes were on Jesse, but Henri was pretty sure Tomas was trying to escape the disaster that was Henri and Logan’s bristling.

“Either of you want to come?” Jesse hitched up his shoulders, ever the peacemaker.

“Soon as I’m done.” Henri crossed his free arm over his chest and held his cigarette hand at an angle. Best to find out now if Logan was going to be one of those guys who insisted on acting as straight as possible. He didn’t want to have to butch it up at rest stops and gas stations all the way from Seattle to Whistler, but if Logan was going to give him a hard time, Henri figured it was best to know now.

Logan tightened his jaw, reading Henri’s challenge. “I’ll wait for Henri.” He took two determined steps forward, like he was working up the courage

for something, but all he did was unlock the passenger-side door and pull it open.

The hinge squeaked ominously, and the rust along the truck's bottom made it look like Logan had driven the thing from Beirut rather than Texas, but Henri picked up his suitcase and nestled it behind the seats.

"One rule." Logan crowded Henri slightly in the crook of the car door. Cute. Apparently somebody thought he was a top.

Smirking, Henri leaned against the rickety door, hoping the hinge could support his weight. "You said *no smoking*. That's one rule already."

Logan licked his lips. Looked like Cowboy was getting turned on. "Well, then one more rule."

Henri took another puff of his cigarette, blowing to the side so as not to get it in Logan's face. "Fine. What's the rule?"

"No cracks about my truck."

Henri laughed before he could stop himself. "Wearing that shirt, you're worried about me making fun of your car?"

Logan ground his teeth, his jaw getting harder. His expression was deathly serious when he said, "I'm gonna pretend you didn't say that."

"Okay." Henri moved to stomp his cigarette under his shoe. Thankfully, Logan stepped away because Henri wasn't sure how much longer he could go without snickering.

Chapter Three

Tomas pushed the cart alongside Henri through the brightly lit aisles of Costco. “So, Henri. Find a new place to live yet?”

“No,” Henri snarled, daring Tomas to make a big deal out of it. “Not yet.” First month’s rent and a security deposit on a studio would drain every last penny out of Henri’s emergency cash, and he flat-out refused to live in another group house.

“The place Logan lives has an extra room open.” Jesse bounced as he walked, his eyes wide and naïve.

Henri was going to kill both of them. Seriously, he’d wait until they were in their tent, and he’d stab them in their sleep. It was bad enough he’d have to come up with conversation for five hours with someone he clearly had nothing in common with, now Henri would have to let Logan down easy about not wanting to live in his house. “I’m sure I’ll find something soon.” He gave Logan an apologetic and hopefully platonic wink.

“That’s cool.” If Logan was offended, he didn’t show it.

Feigning interest in a ten-pound container of Chex Mix, Henri veered to the right. Unfortunately, Logan chose that exact moment to head to the left and ran into him.

“Ow!” Henri rubbed his chest where he’d gotten slammed by Logan’s elbow. “Can you watch where you’re going?”

“Sorry.” Logan hung his head. “Only got a few hours of sleep after my shift last night.”

“Oh.” All right, now Henri felt like shit. The guy had been up all night, Henri guessed fighting fires since he was a friend of Tomas’s, and here Henri had assumed Logan was being clueless on purpose. Henri hated when he did that—jumped to one conclusion when there was another possible explanation.

He forced himself to smile, though he had a feeling it came out more like a wince. After all, his ribs did hurt. “No worries.” Stepping away a few feet, he gave Logan a wider berth.

Tomas and Jesse pulled ahead to the cheese aisle, and Henri followed Logan over to the meats.

“So...what kinda food do you like?” Logan picked up a few packets of cold cuts.

“You know. Most stuff.” Henri checked for the packet with the highest weight.

“If you need a place to stay, I can introduce you to the guys...” Logan chuckled, “...and the one girl in the house.” He eased across the sandwich-meats refrigerator, forcing Henri to cringe to avoid sharing space. “But to tell the truth, the room is more like a closet. No one would wanna live there more than a few months.”

“Yeah. That’s nice,” Henri snapped, but he couldn’t seem to stop it. Ever since he’d heard about the herpes thing he’d been paranoid to touch people. Even with friends, he’d kept his distance. Henri didn’t know if he felt contagious or if other people seemed contagious, but the idea of being close to anyone before getting his second set of test results back made his skin crawl. “I really don’t need a new place. Once summer comes and I start working, I’ll have lots of options. I just need to wait another month.”

“Well, okay.” Logan nodded his enormous head. He’d left his cowboy hat in the truck, leaving his dark blond hair messy and ruffled. Henri resisted the urge to lick his hand and shape it into something less horrible. Nothing could be done about his clothes, though. The cowboy wore a *Don’t Mess With Texas* shirt, as far as Henri could tell without the slightest trace of irony, and a rather unfortunate pair of bleach-stained jeans. With his round and fair baby face, the loose-fitting top wasn’t doing him any favors. Weird, because most of the gay guys Henri knew had at least a rudimentary level of fashion sense.

Logan grabbed a different container from the shelf. “You like turkey?”

“Yeah.” Henri reached into his pocket for his phone.

“Maple or Italian?” Logan compared the two choices, reading the back labels. For God’s sake, who did that?

“I’m not trying to be rude here, but I really don’t care.” Henri scrolled through his phone to his Facebook page. With only one wobbly bar, it took forever to load.

“Maybe we should get ham instead. Shake it up.” Logan considered another plastic packet of sandwich meat, scanning the label. “You into

ham?”

“Uh-huh.” Henri forced out an answer, although honestly he could give a fuck what food they bought. Well, except for one thing. “I want bacon.” He held his phone up, hoping to catch enough of whatever mysterious wavelength carried the 4G signal he needed to cyber-stalk his ex.

“Okay.” If Logan thought he was weird for waving his phone around in the air, he didn’t say anything. “So, you want thick cut or regular?”

Henri flared his nostrils on a breath. Between gritted teeth, he muttered, “Just get what you like. I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

Silently, Logan picked a few things off the shelves.

Henri’s page loaded, but once he thumb-typed Preston’s name and hit enter, he was waiting all over again. He checked Logan’s expression, finding Logan wore an uncharacteristic frown. Not like he knew the guy all that well, but the frown seemed wrong. It crinkled Logan’s smooth forehead.

Against his better judgment, Henri asked, “Something the matter?”

“Nope.” The set of Logan’s mouth showed he was lying, but Henri didn’t know Logan enough to start digging into his issues. Preston’s page had finally appeared on his feed, and Henri scrolled through it.

Unfortunately, Preston hadn’t updated his status since the day before. There were no cryptic windows into his feelings.

“But don’t go complainin’ if I don’t get the stuff you want.” Grumpily, Logan picked up a crate of strawberries and balanced them on top of the tortilla chips in their cart.

Henri picked the container out and set it down next to the rows of bright red fruit. “You’re better off not taking produce over the border. Don’t want to waste time having it confiscated.”

Logan scrubbed a hand over his face. “Oh yeah. I forgot.”

Under the bright overhead lights, Henri saw that Logan had puffy bags under his eyes. “You want to split up? I can grab nonfood stuff like paper towels and bug spray.” He pointed to the lower half of the shopping list in Logan’s hand.

“Yeah. That would be cool. Thanks.” Logan’s face split into a smile. He had a dimple on one side and a little crease there, showing where his first wrinkle would form. “Meet ya at the checkout?”

Henri had never heard an accent like Logan's in real life, only on TV or in movies. He resisted the urge to tease him about it since Logan was so hypersensitive. "Yeah. Sure."

Logan eased his cart forward.

"Hey." Tomas waved from the next line over. He and Jesse held hands as they waited, not paying any attention to the fact that the guy behind them was making a pissed-off face.

Logan didn't know what he was more jealous about—that they were so open in public or that they seemed so comfortable together. He wasn't sure whether he and Soleil had ever been so happy. With her, he'd always been embarrassed to hold hands in public. He'd felt like he was lying, and like anyone who looked his way would have been able to tell.

"Oh, hey." Henri wandered over, managing to act bored and impatient at the same time. He set his basket by Logan's boots and started unloading it into the cart.

Behind them, a woman mumbled something about cutting.

"Should we go to the back of the line?" Logan asked under his breath.

"Why?" Henri said a lot louder than Logan would have liked. He rose to standing, hand on his hip and chin tipped up. "You've been waiting the whole time, and I'm only adding a few things."

The lady behind them let out a small harrumph.

Eyes on the checkout, Henri shrugged. "Whatever." Apparently, regardless of Logan's hang-ups about rousing other people's dislike, Henri didn't give two fucks.

They rolled forward when their turn came and unloaded their groceries on the belt. If the woman still had complaints, Logan wasn't aware of them because Henri was standing close enough that Logan got a whiff of his hair.

Henri smelled musky and rich, like fancy shampoo and clean sweat. The scent went right to Logan's belly, making Logan want to forget every one of Henri's glib insults.

Peering down casually, Logan studied the sway of Henri's back and the curve of his ass. Logan had often seen Soleil from this angle. She was shorter than Henri, but only by a couple inches. The feeling Henri inspired

was totally different. The desire was deeper, grittier. It had nothing to do with friendship and everything to do with wanting to get naked.

“You want to get this, or should I?” Henri reached into his back pocket, sliding out a slim wallet. Thumbing through a pile of credit cards, he frowned. “Come to think of it, can I pay? I don’t have any cash.”

Logan wasn’t sure what to make of that, since he was pretty sure Henri’s shirt, jeans and shoes cost more than a week of Logan’s paycheck. “Sure.” He shrugged. “I guess.”

Henri slipped his credit card through the reader and signed his name.

“You guys done?” Tomas and Jesse walked over, wheeling their cart full of groceries. Out the door, Logan spotted a patch of purple sky. They better get on the road soon or they’d be driving halfway through the night.

“Yeah.” The smell of hot dogs wafted from Costco’s cafe, and Logan’s stomach growled. “I should get somethin’ to eat.”

A guy like Henri probably never ate hot dogs. If the fit of his jeans was any indication, he survived on salad and cigarettes.

“Oh.” Jesse slumped, pouting. “Me and Tomas wanted to stop in Vancouver for dinner. Can you guys wait?”

“Three hours from now?” Henri waved his hand dramatically, like Jesse was asking him to do something torturous. “No way. I’m getting a foot long.” He smirked. “And yes, that was innuendo.” He strode a dozen feet before casting Logan a sidelong glance over his shoulder. “You coming? Or are you gonna tell me all the crap they put in those things will give me cancer?”

Logan smirked. Hell yeah, he could watch Henri wrap his pretty lips around a sausage. “Sure, I’ll grab a dog.”

“Fairies.” A guy bumped into Jesse from behind, pushing between Jesse and Tomas and ruining every last bit of Logan’s good mood. Not bothering to hide his snicker, the asshole went over to his group of hoodlum friends who were sitting at one of Costco’s tables.

Logan shouldn’t have minded the guy. There were bullies everywhere, and he’d stood up to his fair share of them in high school. But this was different. This was about something Logan cared about, a part of him that was still unsure. His stomach twisted in a knot, and it was all Logan could do not to walk right out of Costco, get in his truck and drive home.

“Yoo-hoo, honey!” Henri waved from his spot at the end of the line, looking about ten times as queer as he had before. “Aren’t you coming?”

The blood drained from Logan’s face, and he resisted the urge to run.

Oblivious to Logan’s embarrassment, Henri wandered across the restaurant, passing right by the jerk who’d bumped Jesse. He tripped in a dramatic and obviously fake sprawl, and landed in the asshole’s lap.

“Oh, I’m so sorry.” Lisp-ing his S’s, Henri cranked his voice loud and high enough that half the cafe stared. He took his time getting off the guy, flopping his legs awkwardly, patting the guy down with limp-wristed caresses.

Logan coughed in his hand to cover his laugh. If Logan had been blushing, it was nothing compared to the purple on the homophobic jerk’s face.

By the time Henri made it back to Logan, the asshole and his friends were skulking out of the café. At Logan’s side, Henri dropped the act. The hand on the hip, the tilt of his chin—yeah, those were still slightly feminine, but every trace of the over-the-top routine was gone.

Logan grinned like an idiot, he was so impressed.

“So, are we getting in line or not?” Henri’s lips were pressed together, like he was proud of his performance but didn’t want to show it.

“Yeah.” Logan waved goodbye to Tomas and Jesse. He exhaled the last of his stress over the assholes as he followed Henri through the tables to the end of the line.

Streetlights lit the highway in dull yellow as they streamed north on I-5 toward the border. Compared to Tomas’s truck, Logan’s was tiny. Cracked plastic moldings hemmed in the stained upholstery. At least it smelled okay. Like mud and hot dogs and a faint lingering scent that Henri guessed was Logan.

“So...” Logan spoke for the first time in a while. He rubbed the steering wheel like he was comforting a pet. “Tomas said you, uh...just got out of a relationship?” His gaze darted across the cab.

In the darkness, Henri couldn’t make out his expression. “Yeah, I did.”

He may not have been able to read Logan’s face, but the sudden tension in his body was crystal clear. Henri had probably sounded harsher than he

meant to be. Still, it was none of Logan's business that Henri's heart was ripped out and bleeding over Preston. The last thing Henri wanted to admit was that his ex had tossed Henri out like expired groceries.

"So..." He steered the conversation elsewhere. "Tomas said you've been here six months?"

"Yeah." Logan exhaled, like he was glad Henri had offered a different topic. "We moved here a little before Christmas."

"We?"

"Me and my girlfriend." Logan scratched the back of his head so hard the guy might have had lice, but Henri was pretty sure he was just nervous. "I mean, my ex-girlfriend."

"Oh, really?" Despite how easily Logan got offended, Henri couldn't help the sarcasm in his voice. "So does the barn door swing both ways, or are you on entirely the wrong kind of camping trip?" He hoped he sounded more teasing than bitchy.

"Well, um..." Logan had moved on to rubbing his jaw. The guy wasn't going to have any hair left on his head if he didn't stop. It was actually kind of cute, if you were into the big, sweet, shy thing in a man.

Too bad Henri wasn't.

"Sorry." He pressed his arm into the crease where the door met the window, and rested his cheek. "It's none of my business." The door was cold and hard, not a great surface to nap against. Fitfully, Henri tried to find a comfortable position.

"You wanna borrow this?" Logan reached into the space behind the seat and pulled out a sweatshirt. He offered it to Henri. "For your head?"

"Yeah." Henri took it, confused. Preston hadn't lent him a single piece of clothing the entire time they dated. Not so much as a sock. That Logan was handing over a sweatshirt, unasked, to a complete stranger, seemed weird enough to be incomprehensible. Henri wanted to say something glib, but he found that he didn't have the heart. "Thanks."

"Don't worry about it." Logan gave him a smile, bunching up his cheeks so one side caved in on a dimple.

Henri folded up the sweatshirt because Preston would have had a hissy if Henri crumpled a piece of his clothing, and laid it against the window to rest his head.

“I’m on the right kind of campin’ trip.” It was hard not to feel like Logan was talking that way on purpose to be funny, though Henri was fairly sure he wasn’t. “Right around the time we packed up to leave Wichita Falls, things with me and Soleil went bad cuz she found my porn stash. Sol wanted to try and work it out, but it was too weird, ya know?”

“So you’d been dating a long time?” Henri asked, speaking as few words as possible so he wouldn’t slip up and make fun of Logan without meaning to. He had the worst habit of mimicking accents, probably because when he was a kid, he’d tried so hard to sound like all the American kids at school. “And it worked?”

“Yeah. Well enough.” Logan chuckled nervously. “For five years. We moved up here because she got a job at Microsoft. She studied computers at school. She’s a couple years older’n me.”

Henri envisioned it easily—Logan dating the kind of girl who liked to wear the pants in a relationship. Logan was big, but he had the vibe of a real softie, what with his round eyes and the one-sided dimple.

Once Logan got talking, the nervous face touching went away. That, and his accent faded a bit. Or maybe Henri was just getting used to it. “I moved out four months ago. Live closer to work now, so that’s cool.”

“You like it up here?” Henri yawned, getting lulled by the vibration of the car and the hum of traffic outside. Logan played a classic rock station on low, and though it wasn’t Henri’s favorite kind of music, it was better than the NPR Michael would have been listening to.

“Yeah, it’s great. I mean the weather can suck, but I like the people.”

“I’ve never been to Texas.” Henri stretched his neck and back, fitting cozily into the corner.

“You from here? Or...”

“Quebec.” After almost fifteen years living in the United States, Henri shouldn’t have been sensitive about where he came from, but he still braced for Logan to ask twenty questions. No, he wasn’t from Montreal, yes, he had a green card... It got tedious.

“Cool. This’ll be my first time to Canada.” Logan paused. “Don’t mean to keep you up with my yammerin’.”

Henri smiled against the sweatshirt. Logan could be funny, though he probably didn’t mean to be. “That’s fine.” They may have talked about something else, but Henri couldn’t remember because he fell asleep.

Logan still hadn't managed to get his hard-on down by the time he pulled into the campground. At least he'd lost it temporarily at the border crossing, but most of the ride? Fully torqued.

Sleeping, Henri had shuffled so that his ass was pressed against Logan's hip, and every time the car jostled, Henri rubbed into him, like he was begging for Logan to twist and grind against the seat of those fancy jeans.

If Logan didn't know better, he'd think Henri knew all of his darkest thoughts and was tempting them to the surface. Henri couldn't have been doing it on purpose, since his snores sounded real enough, but Logan swore Henri's spirit, or maybe his subconscious, was doing its best to drive Logan insane.

The parking lot was packed with cars, a lot of them open and lit from inside. In one group, a lighter flashed on a red simmering ball he knew was a pipe full of marijuana. Well, that explained why Seattle guys were always talking about BC Bud and Van-Amsterdam.

The campground stretched across a big field marked with tent sites. Picnic tables clustered in the middle, and a road dotted with small RVs led around the outside. To the left was a building that must have been the office and camp store but was shuttered for the night.

In the cold, Logan reached for another sweatshirt. He was going to put it on, but at the last minute he draped it over Henri's shoulders. That let him lean across the seat and notice Henri's lips were parted, his cheeks flushed and pretty.

Henri jerked, so Logan retreated before he could wake up.

Tomas had explained that there would be extra gear Logan could borrow, so Logan made his way to a setup in the middle of the field. Six tents made up the central location, all bigger and newer than the others around. A table lay under a suspended tarp, with a camping lantern hanging down in the middle. Gnats buzzed around the light, a few trapped and mingling inside.

"Hey. I'm with Tomas Perez." He approached one of the guys hanging out under the tarp. "I was supposed to borrow a couple tents and campin' pads."

The guy didn't speak, just jutted his chin at the far table. A few rolls lay next to a thick-stuffed bag. Assorted supplies lay next to those—a stove, a

few pans, a small stack of plastic plates.

“There’s only one tent left.” The guy waved at the stuff. “But help yourself to whatever else you need.”

One tent. Logan’s pulse kicked from excited to *fucking hell yeah*. Henri might complain about them having to share the whole weekend, but to Logan the prospect of being so close to Henri’s pert behind for three nights was pretty dang sweet.

“You can have campsite one-oh-three.” The guy wrote something on his clipboard and walked away.

The ground was soft and rocky, and Logan got the stakes in easily. After laying the pads and sleeping bags on either side, he put Henri’s suitcase between them so Henri wouldn’t automatically assume Logan would jump him in the middle of the night.

When he couldn’t come up with another excuse to put it off, Logan went to get Henri.

The inside of the truck was cold enough that Logan’s breath rose in puffs of white. Henri cuddled across the seat with one of Logan’s sweatshirts under his head and the other across his neck and shoulders. He faced away from Logan, with his feet on the driver’s seat and his ass sticking out. When he shifted, the seat of his jeans wiggled.

“Hey, Henri?” Logan touched his arm. “Wake up, buddy, the tent’s all set up.”

Henri muttered something about tests in a few weeks. He must have been thinking about finals.

Logan laughed, gently shuffling closer. “You’re gonna have to get out.” He hovered over Henri’s body, close enough he could smell the lingering soda on Henri’s breath and see the flush on the upper edge of his cheeks. “You don’t want to sleep in here all night.”

“What?” Henri woke up with a start, the back of his head slamming Logan in the nose. “Who are...?” All at once he seemed to notice how close Logan was because he pushed Logan away with arms flailing. “What the fuck?” Eyes wild, Henri wiped drool from the edge of his lip.

“I wasn’t tryin’ anything.” Logan held up his hands, backing out the driver’s side of the car. Sure, he’d liked looking at Henri, but it wasn’t like he’d kissed the guy. What in the hell was Henri’s problem? “You didn’t wake up, so I woke you. Just to tell you the tent’s all set.”

Henri scrunched his face in something like a sneer. “Tent? As in singular?” He looked out the window, blinking at the campground. “I thought we were each getting our own.”

“Jeez, man. They only had one left. And *you’re welcome* for me setting it up.” Logan backed away from the truck, trying to get his anger under control. “Our tent is at spot one-oh-three, if you want to sleep there.” He managed to keep his voice level, but he couldn’t force it to be nice. “I put your suitcase inside.”

Logan stomped across the field in the dark. He worried Henri might not be able to find the site on his own, but fuck if Logan was going to head back to the truck and risk making an ass out of himself again.

Tomas and Jesse were just getting to their campsite, and Tomas waved to Logan. “Hey! You made it.”

Yeah? Well, Logan was pissed at them too. “Yeah. G’night,” he bit out, climbing into his tent. It was too dark to see anything, but Logan used the screen from his phone for enough brightness to find his way into his sleeping bag.

He could chew Tomas out tomorrow, maybe scare up another tent or find a guy who wanted to trade. Logan knew Tomas had meant well, but there was only so much abuse Logan could take for the privilege of getting in Henri’s tight little pants.

He’d started reading a book on the tablet computer Soleil had given him for Christmas—staring at the page more like—when he heard the rustle outside that meant Henri had finally gotten over his tantrum.

“Hey.” Henri lifted the flap and reached inside. The tent was only four feet off the ground at its highest point in the middle. Henri knelt and held out Logan’s sweatshirts. “Here’re your clothes. Thanks for letting me borrow.”

Logan nodded, not wanting to say anything angry.

“Are you getting a signal over here?” Henri pointed at Logan’s tablet. His voice was lilting and sweet, as if he was trying to apologize.

“Yeah.” The campground had Internet, though the sign-up page had reminded campers not to stream anything. “You need to check somethin’ online?”

“No. I can check my email on this.” Henri pulled a smartphone out of his pocket, flashing it at Logan. “Turned off my data, though, since it costs a

fortune in Canada.” Henri looked sheepish, maybe a little embarrassed. He didn’t smile, but the corner of his bow-shaped mouth curled on one side. “I was just thinking maybe we could stream a movie.”

Quick as nothing, Logan’s frustration rushed out of him. How could Henri be such a dick one minute, and then cute the next? “We’re not supposed to…” Fuck it, it was one thirty in the morning. No one was awake anyway. Logan let the happy feeling in his chest tug his lips up in a smile. “Yeah. I could watch somethin’.”

“Cool.” Henri grabbed a toothbrush and some toothpaste out of his bag, as well as a small pile of clothes that Logan guessed were pajamas. “I’ll be back in a sec.”

The water from the tap was cold enough to set Henri’s teeth chattering, and he spat his toothpaste in the sink before the chill could seep in the one filling in the back that always ached when he ate ice cream.

He swiped a hand across his mouth, looking in the mirror. The square of metal above the campground’s sink was scratched and blurry, with only enough reflection for him to see that, yes…yes, there he was. Guess he wasn’t going to be checking the size of his pores any time soon. Fuck, he wasn’t even sure he’d remembered to pack his facial cleanser.

Splashing some water over his face, Henri did his best to remove the dark circles under his eyes. He rubbed his hands through his hair, which was dented on one side from sleeping in the truck. It didn’t matter what Logan thought of Henri’s appearance, not like he was trying to hook up with Logan or anything, but grooming was second nature to Henri. He hated the idea of not looking good.

The field stretched empty and dark beyond the door from the bathrooms, with the only lights sparkling from inside tents in the distance. Henri wished he had a flashlight, because as he hurried down the steps he could barely make out the bushes and grass along the sides. Anything could have been hiding in there. A raccoon, a zombie… Fuck, there could even be a bear. One of those small black ones, but still…

He leapt down the last three steps and jogged to the edge of the field, where it was darker but at least there weren’t any trees or bushes. By the time he was a third of the way across, his eyes adjusted. A moon hung right above the edge of the mountaintop. He stopped and tilted his head to the

sky, seeing a thousand stars. A hundred billion. So much brighter than in the city.

As he neared the tent, the flap rustled, and Logan's head poked out. "Were people still in the bathroom?"

Henri kicked his shoes off in the space between the rain fly and the inner tent. "No." He shivered, dragging off his fleece and shoving his feet to the bottom of his sleeping bag. With numb fingers, he struggled with the zipper.

"Want me to get that?" Logan's hand brushed warm across his.

"I'm not a kid." Still, Henri lay on his back and got his hands down by his nuts. Gritting his teeth, he said, "I could do it myself."

"I know." Logan tugged the zipper until it was up by Henri's chin.

Logan's gaze fastened on Henri's lips, and a moment stretched between them. A flash of heat or maybe a shared understanding. Logan wanted him, Henri knew it as sure as he knew that with the fear of herpes hanging over him there wasn't a damn thing in the world Henri could do about it.

"So, what do you want to watch?" Henri wormed his arm out to get at his camping pillow.

Logan exhaled, clearly knowing he'd been dismissed. When he prodded his tablet, the screen lit the frown on his face. "Damn it to hell." His forehead creased, making his frown dig deeper.

"What?"

"Internet's down." Logan shut off the screen and set his tablet aside. In the dark, it was impossible to tell whether the disappointment in his voice was over the Internet or he and Henri not hooking up. "Not even one bar." Logan made a clucking noise with his tongue. "I bet everyone else is streamin' already."

"You think?" Henri blinked at the roof of the tent. They lay in silence for maybe a minute, enough time for Henri to notice the hoots of an owl outside and the way the trees scratched and scraped together in a cacophony louder and more disturbing than any roadwork he'd had to listen to in Seattle.

The tent fluttered at a gust of wind. Maybe it was branches or bushes or even squirrels, but there was an itchy, squeaking noise Henri could hear in the distance.

Logan's breaths blended into the melody, but those too were unfamiliar. Henri was never going to fall back asleep.

“We could tell ghost stories.” Logan chuckled to himself like he’d said something funny.

“Fuck, no.” What, was Logan crazy? Henri was freaked out enough with the fear of having to run to the bathroom in the middle of the night in the dark. The last thing he needed was more scary-ass thoughts zinging around his head. Henri wrapped his arms around his belly, rubbing to try and get circulation in his cold hands. “Let’s just go to sleep.”

“Okay.” Logan’s sleeping bag crinkled as he turned over. “Then I’ll see you in the mornin’. G’night.”

“Good night.” Henri’s words rose in a flow of white mist.

Now that the tent was silent except for the noises outside, Henri sort of wished he and Logan had kept talking. That low voice, and even the funny way Logan swallowed his consonants, would be better than lying here chilled and scared and bored.

Henri pulled the sleeping bag’s hood over his head and drew on the drawstring to cinch it around his face. When he flipped onto his side, the opening splayed awkwardly across his nose.

The inside of the bag warmed up his chest and his hips, but his hands were still freezing. Fucking mountain water. He rubbed his palms together between his legs, hoping the warmth would reach his knuckles. Somehow in the mix of it, he managed to give himself an erection.

Staring at the tan fabric only a foot from his face, Henri pressed a palm to his dick. *Hmmm...* Coming would get him nice and tired. In fact, he’d probably knock off right after and not even notice the weird sounds outside. He just had to do it subtly enough Logan wouldn’t think it was an invitation.

He fed his hand under his waistband and took hold of his cock. A slow massage got him the rest of the way hard, but every time he tried to pick up the pace, his sleeping bag whispered with a shimmering noise of nylon on nylon. Henri squirmed onto his stomach. Not his favorite way to get off, but if Henri arched his hips subtly enough, he could rub his erection through the cuff of his palm without sounding quite so obvious.

Just a little more... He lifted his head, looking over at his suitcase. Henri hoped he’d brought some wipes and he wouldn’t need to use a shirt.

“Uh. You need these?” Sheepishly, Logan held out a packet of travel-sized tissues.

Motherfucker. Why the hell couldn't Logan mind his own business? Or pretend not to notice? That was the standard protocol when a guy next to you in a tent was jerking off, right? Or maybe Henri was confusing a tent with a freshman dorm. Regardless, letting a guy know you know he's rubbing one out was just rude.

Unfortunately, Henri hadn't packed any hand wipes, and he had no idea where Logan had put the paper towels. Even though he was angry enough to spit, Henri took the packet and tore out two sheets, then rolled to face the other direction.

"I don't mind." Logan spoke up, his voice somewhere between a whisper and a mumble. "If you need to do it to fall asleep, I get that, man."

Henri sighed. His frustration only got his dick harder, but he was one Texan-accented comment from telling Logan to shut the fuck up.

"It's—"

"Sh!" Henri rubbed faster. Fuck it. Logan knew what he was doing. There was no need to stay quiet. The faster he got through this, the faster he'd fall into precious oblivion.

"Oh. Okay." With the sound of fabric shearing across fabric, Logan rotated away. Thankfully silent.

Chapter Four

Fuuuuuuuuck me. Logan pricked up his ears so hard he swore he could have heard a pin drop. The *shwp-shwp-shwp* of Henri's sleeping bag painted a hell of a picture, but it was the tiny hitches of breath that had Logan aching in his shorts.

This was nothing like those awkward times where he'd lain next to Soleil wondering if she was doing the same thing. That had been torture, every shift in the mattress reminding Logan how he'd failed to satisfy her, every quiet moan making him feel more like crap that he wasn't turned on.

Sure, at first Logan had been offended that Henri hadn't suggested they do it together. But hell, Henri didn't know him from Adam. Of course Henri wasn't going to get naked and sweaty with some guy he'd just met.

But if Henri had wanted something, Logan was sure he could have performed. It wouldn't be like those nights when he couldn't get it up with Soleil.

Logan grabbed his dick, squeezing in time with the *shwp-shwp* of Henri's covers. *Hell, yeah.* With Henri, Logan could have gone all night.

Tissues already in position, he eased his foreskin back and forth over his tip. He teased at the juice seeping out, imagining Henri licking there. Henri was probably into that—giving guys head. Logan should have practiced with a cucumber or something, learning to deep throat before the weekend. If the opportunity came up to get Henri off with his mouth, Logan hoped he didn't fuck up.

With a faint grunt, Henri shifted. His sleeping bag rustled extra fast.

Logan's dick pulsed in his hand. He rubbed it, eyes clenched and biting his lip so hard he might have broken skin. Holding his breath, he listened. Henri was silent, so Logan couldn't tell exactly when he came. His peak hit fast, almost without preamble, and though coming felt good, Logan was more interested in listening for Henri's breathing than milking out aftershocks.

He balled up his wad of tissues and worked them out of his bag and into the corner next to his night bag. Henri's breaths had gone quiet, and Logan wished he could peek over to see what Henri's face looked like. His cheeks were probably red like they'd been when he'd napped in Logan's truck.

Damn, Logan wanted to put that stain there, to get Henri excited and panting and coming all over. Good thing he had all weekend. It shouldn't be too hard. After all, there was a second there where Logan felt something, like maybe Henri had wanted to crane his head up and give Logan a kiss.

A couple of guys, hanging out... Logan wasn't bad looking. He bet if he turned up the charm, Henri would give him a try.

The first thing Henri smelled when he woke up was coffee. The second was bacon.

He rolled onto his back, staring at the top of the tent and anticipating the salty, crisp fat. Henri was probably sublimating with food since he wouldn't be getting laid anytime soon, but if he couldn't eat cock, bacon was a pretty good substitute.

The smell of Logan was there too, though the guy himself no longer took up the better part of the tent. Henri lifted his head off the sweatpants he'd somehow replaced his pillow with in the middle of the night, and assessed his surroundings. Logan's duffel filled the corner, meaning Logan must have slept scrunched in the shortened space. Other than that, Logan's side of the tent was completely clean.

Henri's side, on the other hand, looked like his suitcase had vomited in the night.

The tent flap rustled, and a slice of Logan's face appeared in the opening. "You awake?"

"Yeah." Henri started to smile, and he forced his lips to a smirk instead. Things had been fine the night before, more comfortable than Henri would have expected, once Logan had stopped talking, but Henri didn't want to get too friendly with Logan and lead the guy on. Between the STI thing and still being hung up on Preston, Henri was in no position to start dating. "Is that coffee at someone else's campsite, or is there a chance I can have some?"

Logan reached into the tent, a travel mug in his giant fist, and handed it to Henri. His grin was shy, and his cheeks red.

Well, drat. Henri was leading him on just by not kicking the guy. “Thanks.” He took the coffee, expecting to find something to complain about in his first sip.

“Jesse told me you like it black with lots of sugar.”

Henri would have rolled his eyes at Logan’s eagerness, but he was too busy groaning in pleasure. “Oh my God, that’s good.” He dropped his head back down to his bed and set the mug next to him on the tent’s floor. Henri hadn’t felt so rested in weeks, definitely not since he and Preston broke up.

Logan reached inside to straighten his sleeping bag. “Yeah? I’m not much of a coffee drinker.”

That single sentence shouldn’t have hurt, but it did. Preston had loved coffee. He and Henri had gone on all their early dates to coffee shops and eaten chocolate-covered espresso beans. Back when Henri worked at Speedy coffee, Preston had come in mornings so they could flirt over cappuccinos.

Not like Henri and Logan were on a date or Logan was a replacement for Preston, but it still made Henri sad.

“You hungry for breakfast?”

“Give me a sec.” Henri took another long drink, letting the caffeine sizzle through his system and imagining he was waking up in a fluffy bed instead of a tent. He would have liked to go back to sleep for a while, but if he hoped to eat whatever bacon was lurking outside, he should get a move on. “I’ll get up.”

“Okay.” Logan backed out the doorway.

Henri unfolded himself from the fabric prison and arched his back in a stretch. His joints ached from sleeping on the ground, but otherwise he felt pretty good for first thing in the morning.

The sky was more white than gray, with a cloud cover that might linger all day or burn off by lunch, and the campground bustled, alive with people and activity.

“Good morning, sunshine.” Michael walked over, reddish hair shiny like he’d showered already. He’d probably gotten an early night after ditching Henri in Seattle.

Henri gripped his travel mug to his chest. If Michael tried to replace his coffee with decaf like he did at the apartment, Henri would smack him.
“Good morning.”

“Can I talk to you for a second?” Michael lowered his voice, leaning down so he could speak in Henri’s ear. Not quite Logan’s height, Michael still had at least four inches on Henri. But unlike Logan, Michael used his height as a weapon, always acting like it gave him the right to boss people around. If the determined expression on his face was anything to go by, Michael was raring to give Henri another one of his opinionated speeches.

“Can I eat first?” Henri looked hungrily to where Logan held a plate brimming with breakfast meat.

Michael caught Henri by the elbow, steering him along. “It won’t take long.” Like he was Henri’s dad or something, Michael led Henri behind the tent, near a trio of scraggly-looking trees.

When they came to a stop, Henri went on the offense. “Is this where you apologize for abandoning me yesterday?”

“Oh, don’t be a drama queen.” Michael stared down his nose. Henri should have known his friend would never, ever admit to being wrong. “You survived. And anyway, Logan seems nice. I was talking to him this morning—”

“Yes. He is.” Henri glanced around, making sure Logan hadn’t heard. Not everyone liked being classified as nice, and Henri didn’t know Logan well enough yet to tell if he’d be offended. “But now he’s going to think I’ll hook up with him.”

“Oh please. It’s possible he’s not even attracted to you.” In a quick shift of expression, Michael’s lips turned down at the corners. “And maybe you should go for it.”

“He’s not my type.” Henri wouldn’t want to hurt Logan’s feelings, especially since some men probably loved big, sweet, country types. Logan wasn’t ugly or anything. His blue eyes were attractive, in an innocent kind of way. In fact, Logan might have been able to meet someone else on the camping trip, if he hadn’t gotten forced into sharing a tent with Henri.

“Your type are assholes.”

“Gee, say what you really think, why don’t you?” Henri knew most of his friends had thought Preston was a selfish, elitist jerk. Okay, maybe all of

his friends. But Henri's dad had liked Preston, and his dad didn't like anyone. "I've dated some guys who were nice."

"Yeah? Name one?"

Henri wracked his brain.

"Didn't Joshua make you drop your major?"

Damn Michael for bringing up stuff from freshman year. "It was a minor, and he was right. I wouldn't have had time for it." Henri hadn't really wanted to take all those Fine Arts classes anyway.

"And Stewart ran over your cat." Michael used his fingers to count off Henri's greatest hits.

"That was my roommate's cat." Henri refused to let Michael feel like he was winning, even though he was still pretty upset at Stewart for refusing to pay for the pet's medical bills.

"At the crisis hotline where I volunteered last year, I learned that women who repeatedly get in abusive relationships need to date guys they're *not* into."

Henri pressed his thumb and forefinger into his eyelids. The conversation was giving him a headache. "I've never dated anyone who hit me." Maybe there'd been a few times when Preston slammed doors or shouted, but that wasn't the same thing.

"I never said you did."

Henri opened his mouth to argue, but he didn't see the point. "Whatever. I'll be nice to Logan." He took a few steps backwards, trying to bail on the conversation before Michael spun some more psychobabble. "And I'm going to go get some bacon now, if that's okay with you."

"You know that stuff will clog your arteries," Michael called after him.

Henri gave him the finger as he walked away.

"Man, Henri can be a spitfire sometimes." Logan pushed his food around the plate, wanting to dig for information about Henri but not wanting to be too obvious about it.

"Yeah, but cute, huh?" Tomas's eyes crinkled, and his laugh was all too knowing. "You should have seen your face when you first saw him, man." Another chuckle, and this time Tomas knocked him in the arm. "I thought your tongue was gonna fall right out of your mouth."

Logan scrubbed a hand on his jaw so he'd have an excuse for why he'd gone so red. "Jeez, man. It's not my fault he was wearin' those jeans."

"You got me there." Tomas gave one of his signature smiles, the kind that made Logan think Tomas was interested in the first place. It was hard to imagine not being attracted to Tomas when he flashed those white teeth against his brownish skin.

Henri was hot in a different way, sharper somehow, like he'd keep a guy on his toes.

"You make a move yet?" Tomas grabbed a piece of bacon off Logan's plate.

"No..." Just then, Henri came into view, followed by his friend Michael. Logan had talked to Michael for a few minutes, and he'd seemed cool enough, but Logan could tell by Henri's slouch that he and Michael had argued.

"Hey." He waved Henri over, holding out the plate. "You want some? I saved you a few pieces."

"Oh my God, yes." Henri took the plate out of Logan's hands, and with his first bite his eyes rolled back in rapturous bliss. "Thanks, chéri. You're a lifesaver." He kept his attention on his plate while he demolished his food, which meant Logan could study him all he wanted.

Henri wore a gray fleece over a black T-shirt, and he'd replaced his jeans from the night before with a pair of sleek track pants. His chin and upper lip were sprinkled with dark stubble. Logan couldn't wait to find out what that scruff felt like when they kissed. Would it scrape, making things rough and gritty, or would it feel like a tickle?

"Should I sign you guys up for capture the flag?" Michael grabbed a clipboard off a nearby picnic table.

"No." Henri pointed a finger at Michael's chest. The look on Henri's face was serious enough Logan would have laughed if he didn't think he'd get his balls ripped off. "I'm outdoors. I'm up early. I'm not playing stupid camp-out games."

If he were in Michael's place, Logan would have backed off, but Michael held his pen against the form. "Your choices are field games, hiking or river rafting. I just figured—"

"We should go raftin'," Logan said before he could stop himself. "I've always wanted to do that." He knew he sounded all wide-eyed and country,

but he didn't give a shit. When Soleil had first told him about moving to Seattle, Logan had been excited about all the cool outdoor stuff he'd heard about from his aunt and uncle. There was mountain biking and cross-country skiing, hiking and kayaking. So much to do it would take a lifetime.

"What are you guys doing?" Henri asked his friend, clearly because he was planning to do whatever Michael wasn't.

"Jesse and I are doing games this morning and a hike in the afternoon." Michael stuck his nose in the air, his expression self-satisfied enough to be funny.

Henri nodded once, then turned to Logan. "You want to go rafting?"

"Hells yeah." Logan gave him a big old grin.

"Rafting? You?" Michael's attitude was skeptical enough Logan wasn't surprised when Henri crossed his arms and stepped his feet apart.

"Why not, chéri?" Henri batted his eyes, though the effect was obnoxious. "Think I don't know how to handle a paddle?" He turned away before Michael had a chance to sputter a comeback. "Thanks for breakfast," Henri told Logan. "I'm going to go wash up."

The whole bus smelled like patchouli overlaid with body odor, so Henri breathed through his mouth, wishing the stinky guy in front of them a dozen violent deaths.

"Thanks for comin'." Logan didn't seem to notice the stench. He sat next to Henri, his energy humming as if he were close to bounding right off the seat and jumping in the river.

The bus was filled with twenty-five men, ranging from Logan's age up to their late-thirties, and they all clutched the life vests they'd been given by the river guide. The tour company would provide wetsuits, spray jackets and booties when they got to the river, so it didn't make sense for any of them to put on the life jackets yet, but Logan was as suited up as he could be, life jacket on over his Wichita Falls Fire Department sweatshirt.

"You know you'd never dry off if that got wet, right?" Henri surveyed Logan's entire outfit. Jeans, a T-shirt, cowboy boots. He didn't seem to own any other clothes. Henri wasn't exactly Mr. Outdoorswear, but he knew Logan was going to be miserable by Monday if it started to rain.

“But they’re gonna give us waterproof stuff for raftin’.” Logan’s smile was so big Henri felt the corners of his mouth tugging up to mimic it.

“Yeah, but tell me you brought a jacket for later. Something waterproof?” The sun had been peeking out in a few spots an hour ago, but now the sky had clouded back over to a solid mat of gray. Sprinkles dotted the van’s windows. Even if it didn’t break into full-on rain, the day promised to get damp eventually.

“Well, I...”

The guy in front of them turned around, getting on his knees to look over the seats. “I’ve got an extra jacket with me.” He rolled his gaze all over Logan’s body as if he were considering a slab of steak in the grocery aisle. “It’ll just about fit you across the shoulders.”

Logan shook his head. “Thanks. I don’t know if I’ll need it, but—”

“I’m Buck.” The guy was around forty and wearing entirely too much flannel—even flannel pants, like somehow it was acceptable to wear pajamas during the day. His tongue darted out to wet his lips, making him look like a turtle. “I’ve got some extra rain pants too, if you need them.”

“You could buy a jacket in Squamish,” Henri muttered. If Logan started wearing Buck’s stinky, middle-aged clothes, Henri would kick him out of the tent.

The river guide at the front of the bus reminded everyone to stay seated, forcing Buck to turn around. Henri let out a sigh of relief.

He hated guys who were pushy. Michael was always saying Henri went for men who were emotionally unavailable. Well, if the other option was buffoons like Buck who had no idea when to back off, Henri preferred the likes of Preston.

They pulled into a gravelly area next to the river. Puddles pockmarked the lot, and trees lined the river.

As all the guys made their way out of the van, Buck waited. He didn’t stand up until right after Logan did, so he could walk directly in front.

“So, I noticed your accent. You from the south somewhere?”

“Yep. Texas.” That three-syllable answer vibrated like Logan was laughing.

Henri didn’t think Logan was flirting, or smiling, or doing anything to encourage Buck’s chicken hawking, but he was too short to know for sure. Buck was on the other side, totally hidden by Logan’s bulk. Henri’d long

since made peace with topping out at five-nine, but times like this he would have liked to stand tall enough to tell Buck where to shove his waterproof jacket and his fake interest in the Southern states.

The river guide dragged a pallet of gear into the parking lot, and the group of men gathered around to grab sizes and sort booties.

Buck hung by Logan's side the whole time, making comments Henri could barely hear over the other guys' talking. He'd say, "Ooh, cowboy boots. Sexy," or, "Is it true everything is bigger in Texas?" and Henri would throw up a little in his mouth.

"Aw, c'mon, Buck," Logan said in a good-natured drawl that made Henri wonder if he wasn't as clueless as he was acting. "You know I'm here with someone." Logan winked at Henri.

Henri swallowed hard. He thought about arguing. Sure, he didn't want Logan getting hit on by some guy way too old for him, but Henri wouldn't go quite so far as to say they were there *together*. Luckily, Logan hooked an arm around his shoulder right then, shocking Henri into keeping his mouth shut.

"Oh." Buck made the kind of face that was pissy enough to show he had a mean streak. He looked Henri over from head to toe, as if he thought Logan could do better, or at least taller. "My mistake."

When Buck took off for the opposite side of the gear pile, Logan chuckled under his breath. "Sorry 'bout that." He drew his arm back into his body, making it clear he'd only been hugging Henri for Buck's benefit. "He was hittin' on me, huh?" Logan's eyes were full of laughter, and it was pretty obvious he was flattered by Buck's attention.

Henri wished Buck would get swallowed by one of the lot's massive puddles. "You don't know for sure?" He grabbed a pair of wetsuit booties, slapping them together to crack the mud off the outsides.

"I dunno. I guess. He was so aggressive I couldn't tell if he was serious." Logan lifted a wetsuit to his shoulders to check its length. His face was down so Henri couldn't see his expression, but Henri figured he was blushing.

"Huh." Henri got a wetsuit that he figured was the right size and stepped aside so other guys could get at the pile. "Must be weird when you're at bars, then."

Logan followed him to a patch of grass at the end of the parking lot and set his stuff down next to Henri's. "Nah. I'm not twenty-one for a few months yet."

"So you didn't, like, know any gay guys in Texas?" Henri kept his voice low and his attention on his wetsuit so as to not make Logan uncomfortable.

"Nah." Logan smiled. Somehow he managed to do that with his chin tucked, like he was looking up at Henri instead of down on him. "Maybe there were some guys there, but I wouldn't have known where to meet them. I wasn't goin' to open my mouth about it and get my ass kicked."

Henri nodded. He wanted to touch Logan's arm, but he worried about leading him on, so he kept his hands to himself. "By your family or the kids at school?"

Logan blinked, confused for a second, but then his forehead cleared. "Oh, the kids at school! Don't get me wrong, most people where I'm from think *The Gays* are goin' to hell, but my mom's like a stranded city girl. I always joked growin' up that she was the only liberal in Wichita Falls."

"Well, I guess that makes it easier." Henri gave him a reassuring shrug, though he suspected things had been tougher for Logan than he was letting on. "And your dad?"

"Well..." The edge of his mouth creased in a hint of worry. "He wasn't too happy when she told him." He darted his gaze to the side, his face flushing. "Yeah, I told my mom but let her be the one to break it to my dad. lame, huh?" Logan looked exactly as young as his twenty years, standing there staring at his boots.

"No." Henri patted him quickly on the biceps. "Hey, I'm impressed you told them at all."

"My mom's sister lives up in Bellin'ham." Logan rolled his shoulders forward, though Henri could tell he was proud to have come clean with his family. "I figured Aunt Vera would tell Mom lickety-split if I ever showed up to visit with a boyfriend, so I decided to lay it all out."

The river guide raised his voice, calling for the attention of all the guys on the trip. Logan, Boy Scout that he was, cocked his head to listen.

Henri tried, but everything the guide was saying seemed pretty obvious, so his mind drifted to Logan. The guy was so new to the scene, Henri felt like he had to protect him.

Logan should find a boyfriend as sweet as he was. A guy right out of high school who'd just come out himself, or a laid-back type from the suburbs who wouldn't give Logan a hard time for his boots or his oversized T-shirts. A guy a hell of a lot nicer than the types Henri dated.

"So, you guys suit up, and let's get out there!" the river guide shouted over everyone's heads.

There was a general whoop of agreement, and everyone on the trip started pulling off shirts and stripping down to underclothes. Henri hadn't considered this aspect of the trip—how they'd all be undressing.

He turned around, so he wouldn't be giving Logan any ideas, and dragged his shirt over his head.

"Um, Henri?" Logan poked his shoulder.

Henri draped his hand across his nipples, not wanting Logan to see his naked chest, and rotated.

He was met by a wall of abs and a ribbon of blond hair dividing two thick pecs. It's not like Henri'd never seen muscles before, but usually not so many so close. That, combined with all that pale flesh, set up a circuit in Henri's mind where all he could think about was *skin, skin, skin, arms, muscles, fuck*.

"Could you zip me up?" Logan shrugged the neoprene onto his incredibly broad—not that Henri was looking—shoulders. He turned to show Henri a back wide enough Henri could have painted a mural on it. "I can't seem to grab..." Logan flailed his arm behind him, trying to catch the rope to pull up the wetsuit.

"I got you." Henri laid his fingers on Logan's back, right in the middle, and then slowly ran his palms up Logan's spine. He felt Logan's ripple of awareness and was glad they weren't facing each other because Henri didn't know if he wanted their gazes to meet.

"Hurry up, guys!" The river guide's call snapped Henri back into himself.

"Here." Henri picked up the rope attached to Logan's zipper. He took Logan's hand, showing him how to reach back and grab it. Then he held the fabric together, making it easier for Logan to zip.

"Thanks." Logan's voice was breathy.

Henri rushed into his own gear before Logan could see he was flustered.

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Chapter Five

Forest crowded the sky above the river, and ferns burst out of rocky ledges. The raft easily navigated most of the white water, so Logan took it all in, flying with excitement.

That couldn't have been accidental, the way Henri had run his hands over Logan's back. Thinking about it made Logan want to jump out of the raft and drag Henri back to their tent for a frantic make-out session. Maybe Henri would say something snide, and it would turn into angry sex, but Logan didn't care. Henri had driven him crazy with that touch.

Casually, Logan snuck a peek at Henri over his shoulder. The chinstrap shaped Henri's face, but even in the bright white helmet, Henri was handsome.

The tour guide shouted over the sound of the river. "Okay, coming up here, you guys paddle. Guys on the right, paddle extra hard."

Logan twisted, wanting to see Henri's reaction to the rougher waters. What he saw surprised him—Henri's skin had gone ashen, and the color had drained from his lips. He looked scared out of his mind.

"Hey." Logan wanted to touch him, but he needed to keep his grip on the paddle. "You okay?"

Henri blinked.

The raft dropped face-first into rapids.

A general chorus of "Woohoo" came from the guys on the boat. Logan wished he could turn around to find out if Henri was getting into it, but he was too busy paddling for all he was worth. Water splashed over his side, and Logan shook it out of his eyes, laughing.

The rough section spit them out into a slow-moving lagoon with a rock hanging overhead. The river guide explained some stuff about the formation, but Logan shifted as best he could on the boat's rubber siding.

Henri's face and hair were wet under his helmet, and his white-knuckled fingers gripped his paddle like he would strangle it.

"Hey. You okay?"

Henri gave a curt nod. “Yeah.”

“You know this is totally safe, don’t ya?” Logan whispered so he wouldn’t ruin their boat mates’ excitement. “No one’s gonna fall in the river.” The guide had given them all kinds of warnings about not hanging over the edge, but honestly Logan suspected it would take some real doing to fall out.

“I know,” Henri said through chattering teeth.

The raft swirled in the open lagoon, so Logan figured it was okay to take his hand off his paddle. He reached for Henri, closing his warmer fist around Henri’s frozen fingers. “I’ll take care of you.” Logan grinned as he said it, sort of joking and sort of not.

Henri stared at where their hands were connected. “You must think I’m a moron.”

“Nah.” Logan held steady, massaging Henri’s hand. “You just got spooked. It happens to the best of us.”

“I guess.” Henri let out a shaky breath. Some of the circulation seemed to be returning to Henri’s skin because it warmed under Logan’s fingers.

“You know I can paddle double, so you can just pretend if you want.” Logan winked at him.

“Fuck you.” Henri rolled his eyes, regaining the pink color in his lips as well as his usual attitude. “I’m perfectly capable of paddling myself.”

Logan shifted back into his seat. “Geez, man, I just thought I’d offer.” He grinned at Henri as he said it.

Henri shoved him, joking around.

“Okay, guys! What do you say we tackle that next section?”

There were eight guys total on the boat, and practically everyone gave a chorus of “Hell yeah.” Logan turned to Henri just in time to catch his smirk.

Henri hated to admit it, but once he’d relaxed, river rafting was fun. Or maybe fun-ish was the right word. His muscles got looser, and he realized he wasn’t being jostled off the boat so much as bounced around, like on a dance floor when the DJ switched tracks.

He managed to connect his paddle with the water a few times, though more often than not he swung it at the wrong time and met air instead of river. No one seemed to notice. Every minute or two, Logan would flash Henri a grin, like he was having the time of his life.

The river widened, and the guide steered the raft toward a small dock. Most of the guys on the boat groaned that it was over, but Henri shivered, looking forward to getting back into dry clothes. Exciting as it had been, river rafting had pushed the upper limit of Henri's adventurousness.

"That was awesome." Logan threw his leg over the side, straddling it as they slowed to a stop. He breathed fast, his face flushed and grinning. Clearly, Logan was made for this kind of stuff. "Right?"

Henri grudgingly nodded. Logan's enthusiasm was infectious. "Yeah. It was pretty."

"Pretty?" Logan clamored out of the raft and held out a hand. "It was fuckin' gorgeous. Did you see that cliff with the rainbow? It was like a postcard."

"Yeah." Times like these, Henri wished he had stuck with the drawing class he'd dropped when he'd been with Stewart. He could have pulled off a Fine Arts minor in addition to the economics degree he needed so his dad would cover his college. Oh well. There were always extension classes, if Henri ever had the money to pay for more school.

Henri grabbed Logan's hand and let Logan pull him out of the boat.

"Thanks for comin'." Logan rubbed Henri's cold hands.

"No problem." Henri would never admit it to Michael, but he was glad he'd gone. Maybe there was something to the outdoorsy stuff after all.

The rest of the guys from the raft were ahead of them, stomping up the wet, cedar staircase to where the tour company had parked the bus.

Logan pulled off his helmet, and Henri did the same. There was a moment when their eyes met, Logan grinning and Henri grinning right back. Henri realized Logan was going to kiss him a split second before it happened.

Henri jerked to get out of the way before their lips touched, and though Logan's kiss landed at Henri's hairline, a thrill of panic still ran through him. *No way. Herpes!* Logan couldn't kiss him, and Henri definitely couldn't kiss Logan back. Plenty of other guys would have taken the risk—especially if it was just a kiss—but Henri couldn't.

"Oh." Logan froze, his breath still in Henri's hair. Slowly, he stepped back. "I'm sorry."

"No. It's fine." Henri held his hands palms up, wishing he could explain in a few words, but the guys on the ridge above were already calling to

them, hollering that it was time for lunch.

“I didn’t mean...” Logan turned away, hiding his expression. “I just mean it’s no big deal.” Shoulders curled forward, Logan headed up the stairs.

“Logan,” Henri called after him. He hated this. If things were different, he would have been on Logan from the second he saw what he was hiding under his shirt. He would have kissed him and even given his dick a squeeze for good measure. Now he’d be stuck with half explanations all weekend. “Wait up.”

He hurried up the stairs to where all the guys were stripping out of their wetsuits. A light rain fell, or maybe a light mist was a better description. The ground was slick and the air moist with tiny bits of freezing rain that tingled Henri’s cheeks. He caught sight of Logan undressing next to the duffel bag where they’d stored their clothes.

Logan’s back was to Henri, beautiful peachy-golden skin on display as he stepped into his jeans. How had Henri not noticed how perfectly those Levi’s cradled his ass? Maybe he’d been ignoring Logan’s butt on purpose, since he knew he couldn’t get any action for a while, or maybe that cowboy hat threw him so badly he didn’t really look any lower, but Henri was looking now. Looking, and wishing desperately that things were different.

“Hey.” He touched Logan’s arm, letting his fingertips linger in an attempt to soothe Logan’s injured pride. “You mind if I get my pants out?”

“Yeah. That’s fine.” Logan pushed Henri’s clothes at him and rushed to get dressed. His movements were stiff and jerky, like he couldn’t get away from Henri fast enough.

And that was fair, Henri would have felt the same way if someone had dodged his kiss, but he didn’t want Logan to leave. “Hold on. I’ll walk with you.” He stripped out of his wetsuit.

Logan paced like he was waiting for a root canal. After a minute he stomped his feet, frowning at his boots.

“Do you need an extra pair of socks?”

“What?” Logan looked up, confused enough by Henri’s question that he stopped sulking.

“Your feet.” Henri pulled on a fleece sweater, and then a rain slicker on top. He pointed at Logan’s feet. “Are they cold?”

“Oh.” Logan peered the long distance down to his feet. “Nah. Not cold as much as tight.” He pounded the ground with his soles again, like he could stretch out his boots against the muddy ground. “They’re wet. Don’t know why, though.”

“It’s the rain.” Henri held up a hand, catching some of the mist in tiny droplets before wiping them off on his pant leg.

“It’s not really rainin’.” Logan squinted, apparently at the air.

“Yeah, well, the drizzle. You have other shoes, right?”

Logan shrugged, his expression thoroughly unhappy.

Henri couldn’t tell if it was about the failed kiss attempt or his soggy footwear. Hopefully the shoe problem would distract Logan from the larger issue of how he and Henri could continue sharing a tent with all this tension congealing between them. “Well, you need to go into town and get something with rubber soles. You’re gonna kill yourself in those things.” Henri sounded just like Michael, and it freaked him out a little.

“I’m fine,” Logan grumbled. He strode toward the picnic tables where the tour company had laid out sandwiches, but only made it halfway before slipping on a patch of mud.

Henri felt so bad for the guy. He wanted to pet him like one of those furry labradoodle puppies, or take him back to the tent and rub his shoulders. Honestly, Henri would have thought that after living a few months in Seattle, Logan would know not to wear shoes with leather soles. Then again, it warmed Henri’s vain little heart that Logan had chosen style—however misguided—over comfort.

“Fuckin’ mud.” Logan stomped his feet again, face dark with frustration.

“Come on.” Henri plucked at his sleeve. It was weird feeling like he was taking care of Logan. Normally he hated guys who needed something from him. Maybe it had something to do with being in the middle of nowhere, but with Logan, Henri didn’t mind taking the lead. “You’ll feel better once you eat something.”

Water dripped off his hair and onto his face, but Logan didn’t bother wiping it off. If he’d felt lower since moving to Seattle, he didn’t remember it. God, he was such an idiot. Of course Henri wasn’t into him. Henri was

sexy and sophisticated. For hell's sake, Henri had lived with a man. What the hell did Logan have to offer? A clumsy blowjob and virgin fumbling?

Yeah, right. That sounded hot.

The bus rumbled through the valley back to the campground. Next to him, Henri sat, saying nothing. He didn't have to. Logan could feel Henri's stare on his cheek, concern and pity rolling off him like bad perfume.

Henri took a breath, like he was going to say something, but then just exhaled.

"I should borrow some rain clothes from Tomas," Logan whispered so Buck wouldn't perk up in the seat in front of them. The drizzle had gotten worse and was coming down in a steady stream of rain outside. Back home, Logan wouldn't have minded getting wet. He'd wait for the sun to come out and hang his damp jeans and sweatshirt to dry. But with the cloud cover low enough to hide the tops of the mountains, it didn't look like it was going to be clearing up any time soon. "His stuff might fit me."

"You could go buy some." Henri touched his leg, like he was trying to make up for his rejection. He pulled back pretty quick though, so it was obvious he found Logan unappealing. "You'll need rain gear if you ever go camping again. And for the winter. You may as well buy the stuff now."

Logan pulled his phone out of his damp jeans pocket and studied his budgeting app. He had the money, but fuck if he wanted to spend it. "Nah. I can tough it out."

"Don't be dumb. Down in Squamish, there's a great little outdoors store, and it's pretty cheap. Not like Costco, but about the same prices as at REI."

"How do you know?"

"My ex has a place in Squamish." When Logan gave him a questioning look, Henri rolled his eyes. "He was thirty, and a business lawyer. Basically loaded. We only came up here a few times."

Great. Now Henri's ex was rich and older. Tomas should have laid out those details right from the start. Logan hadn't had a snowball's chance in hell with Henri.

"Sounds nice." Screw it. Logan had the cash. Maybe not as much as Henri's ex, or enough to pay off his credit card right now, but he earned an okay living.

Anyway, Henri was right—he'd need rain clothes eventually. "Fine. I'll drive down." Maybe the forty-five-minute ride to Squamish would clear his

mind, give Logan a chance to breeze past the weirdness.

“Logan—” Henri started like he was going to talk about what happened.

“So what do you think I’ll need?” Logan cut him off. He brought up an empty screen on his phone and fixed to write a shopping list. “A jacket? Maybe some hikin’ boots?”

Henri’s eyes were soft, like he knew exactly how hard Logan was working to keep things casual. “Yeah, a jacket, for sure.” Henri counted off items on his fingers. “You’ll want to get something water resistant, but not so heavy you’ll sweat underneath. And a fleece layer for under that.”

Logan took notes on his phone, glad that for the time being he could pretend nothing had happened.

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Chapter Six

Henri poked at the embers, wishing there was some way to turn back time and explain to Logan what had happened. Unfortunately, Henri couldn't see any way out of their awkward standoff. All he could hope for was that when Logan got back from Squamish, somehow things would be better.

The air was cold and the sky a dull bluish gray, so even the most die-hard campers had given up field games and were huddled in their tents or around their campfires. Henri added a few more sticks to the edges of his fire, but with the wood soggy and Michael's grim refusal to allow anyone to use lighter fluid, Henri doubted he could save his sad, little blaze.

"Hey." Michael strode in his direction. "You need some more kindling? We have some over there." He jerked his thumb behind him, at his cluster of mega tents and his team of do-gooder drones.

A couple of guys from the organizers' area had pulled out some bongos and were forming a drum circle.

Henri missed Logan. He bet no one ever started drum circles in Texas. Logan would probably say something surprised or naïve—funny without meaning to be—and Henri would smile.

"No. I'm good." Henri pointed to the sticks he'd piled at the metal edge of the barbeque pit.

"Jesus. Stop making things hard on yourself." Michael took a few steps, gesturing that Henri should follow. "Just come over and grab some firewood."

Henri sighed. Was Michael always this overbearing? Henri felt like another one of Michael's projects. "What is your problem?"

Michael stared at him with confused eyes. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, stop trying to run my life." Henri tossed his stick on the ground so he could tuck his freezing hands in his armpits. "I'm not a little kid. Believe it or not, I can take care of myself."

“Yeah. And that’s why you’re staying at my apartment? And assuming I’ll drive you up here even though you didn’t ask?” Michael frowned at the dirt ground, face pinched as if maybe he hadn’t meant to say all that. “I’ve watched you sabotage yourself for four years.”

“Fine. I’ll move out.” Raising a hand to stop Michael from trying to get in the last word, Henri started toward the bathrooms. “When we get back to Seattle, I’ll pick up my stuff.”

“Oh, come on. I didn’t mean it like that,” Michael called after him.

But Henri didn’t answer.

He walked the long way around the field, sweeping by the river and through the more remote tent sites. The drizzle let up, and late-afternoon sunshine sliced through the clouds in places. Guys sprung up around the field like daisies, playing touch football, Frisbee and hackysack.

At the farthest end of the field, a couple guys messed with a thick, yellow strap. When they spotted Henri walking by, they both looked up.

“Hey. Excuse me.” One of them had long red hair pulled back in a bun. The other was an average, outdoorsy hippie, wearing knee-length hiking pants over long underwear and sporting a grin like Peter Pan.

“Yeah?” Henri checked behind him to make sure they weren’t speaking to someone else. He didn’t usually like getting roped into things with strangers. “You need something?”

“Can you give us a hand?” The red-haired one held up the yellow strap. Henri was pretty sure he’d seen contraptions like that slung up between trees at parks in Seattle. Guys used them to practice some kind of tightrope walking. It was about Zen, or balance, or maybe rock climbing. At least that seemed like the type of guys Henri normally saw hovering around that kind of activity.

“Yeah. We should be able to get the slack line up with just two people. But...” The skinnier one shrugged. “This is our first time trying. I just bought it off craigslist the other day.”

“Sure.” Henri spotted the trees they were planning to use. With nothing better to do, he figured he may as well help. “What do you want me to do?”

“I’m Rainier, by the way.” The redhead waved. “Most people call me Rain.”

It wasn’t the first time Henri had heard the name Rainier in Seattle, but it was always hard for him not to giggle since Mt. Rainier was a major

Northwest landmark.

“Gray.” The skinnier one held out a hand. His face was bright with a smile. “I know, Rain and Gray. Pretty funny, huh?”

Henri was glad he had permission to smile. “Not so funny.” Henri shook Gray’s hand. “I’m Henri.”

“Nice to meet you.” Rainier measured lengths of the strap by wrapping them from his forearm to his elbow. “Could you walk this around that tree over there?”

Henri did as Rainier directed. Rain and Gray couldn’t seem to agree on what height to position the strap, so they both stood in the middle, measuring.

Rainier placed a level on it to make sure it was completely horizontal, which was funny, since the guy dressed like he shopped in the dumpster behind Goodwill and his hair frizzed out the edges of his bun like he’d never heard of conditioner.

“You want to give it a try?” Rainier stood back proudly, assessing his handiwork.

“Uh, yeah. Sure.” Henri checked the campground and where Michael and his group were engrossed in their drumming. He didn’t want an audience if he screwed up.

“You do it like this.” Gray grabbed a branch on the tree, stuck his foot at the juncture of the rope and hoisted himself on top. He walked across, turned once at the center and fell off as gracefully as a cat.

“Is that supposed to happen?” Henri would have thought the goal would be to reach the opposite tree, but he was pretty sure Gray could have done that if he hadn’t stopped to spin.

“Yeah.” Gray blew his medium-brown hair out of his face. “There’s all kinds of tricks guys do. But you can just walk straight across if you want.”

Rainier tugged Gray over and landed a kiss on his cheek. “Good job, babe.”

Henri hadn’t realized they were together, but seeing the way Rainier looked into Gray’s eyes, the two of them were flat-out adorable.

“You gonna try it?” Gray asked.

“Okay.” Henri grabbed the same branch as Gray had, pivoting up to the strap. It was only a few feet off the ground and almost as wide as his shoe. Henri bounced, feeling the springy give. From his spot higher up, he could

see across the camp and the parking lot to the road beyond, over the ridge to the river that ran through the valley. The different vantage point was fabulous.

“Don’t laugh,” he told Gray and Rain, though in all honesty it didn’t matter if they did think he was stupid. He’d likely never see them again. Henri stepped forward, splaying his arms wide for balance. He moved his feet fast enough to get halfway across before falling.

“Nice one!” Gray gave him a slow clap. “Awesome showing for a first time, man.”

Henri’s face heated under the praise. He wasn’t normally athletic, but he had done ballet for a while as a kid, before his dad made him quit.

Rain got up on the strap, holding the tree with one hand. He was taller than either Henri or Gray, and it took him a few bounces to get his bearings before he skittered across. He got about the same distance as Henri had and attempted something that looked like a trick, before stumbling off and laughing.

With nothing better to do, Henri hung out for a while, taking turns with the other guys on the slack line. His improvement lingered behind Gray—who he found out taught yoga—but he held his own against Rain.

Henri didn’t notice that he was hungry until he spotted Logan heading in their direction.

And, yum. Totally re-outfitted, Logan wore laced-up boots with thick rubber soles, a black rain slicker and blue-gray hiking pants. The darker colors did interesting things to his features, making his face look more severe and slimming away the baby fat on his cheeks.

“Hey. You want a turn?” Gray asked from behind him.

“No. That’s okay.” Henri was suddenly nervous about doing a skill he’d been kicking ass at not five minutes ago. He didn’t want to look stupid in front of Logan.

In fact, he would have headed in Logan’s direction and avoided the whole slack-line conversation, but Logan picked up his pace to a jog, and Henri refused to be one of those dorky pairs who ran toward each other across open grass.

“Hey.” Logan waved as he slowed to a walk.

Henri braced for Logan to ask him what he was doing there and why he wasn’t back at the tent, but Logan just held out his hand for Gray to shake.

“I’m Logan, a friend of Henri’s.”

Henri stuttered, confused for a second that Logan wasn’t angry, or jealous, or waiting to yell at him about something. It took him the full length of introductions between Logan and the slack-line guys for Henri to realize that’s what Preston would have done.

That’s what all his exes would have done. Henri couldn’t have felt more off balance if gravity reversed itself. Did he really date men who were like that—willing to take any excuse to berate or scold? Yeah. Maybe he did.

“I had some chicken and potatoes in town.” Logan touched Henri’s arm casually. “Brought some back for you.”

“Thanks,” Henri said, his throat tight.

“Can I try that?” Logan pointed to the slack line.

“Sure.” Rain stepped out of the way.

Logan only lasted a few seconds. He swung his arms wildly and fell off before he could get in more than a couple steps.

Henri hated to drag him away, especially since it sounded like Logan had already eaten, but he was starving. “Do you mind if I go grab that food?” He would have left Logan with Rain and Gray, avoiding more awkward conversation for as long as possible, but Henri couldn’t imagine what Logan had done with the dinner.

“I’ll come with you.” Logan was on his second try and let himself fall off the slack line. He bounded to Henri’s side. “See you, guys.” He waved to Rain and Gray.

The tension that had plagued them since river rafting crept back as they walked across the field. Henri pinched his lips together because he couldn’t come up with anything to say. On an awkward step, Logan stumbled close enough to touch hands, but then he put more space between them. “Sorry.”

“No worries.” Henri could make up a lie and say that he didn’t like to get physical with men until he knew them better, but innocent as Logan might be, he would never buy that level of bullshit.

On the other hand, he could tell Logan about the herpes thing, but Logan might go running for the hills. Henri would feel two feet tall if that happened.

“There’s supposed to be a campfire tonight,” Logan offered.

“Yeah. I heard something about that.”

They got to the tent, and Logan handed him a paper bag with grease spots.

Henri ate standing up. The chicken was fried and salty and the potatoes slathered in gravy. After a day outdoors and with more exercise than Henri normally got in a week, it tasted better than the fanciest restaurant Preston had ever taken him to.

“Listen, I have to tell you something.” Henri swallowed his mouthful of food. He needed to say something, anything to take the frown off Logan’s face. “My ex...” He took a deep breath, struggling to figure out how to phrase things. “Let’s just say he really screwed me over, and I—”

“You’re not ready to see anyone else,” Logan rushed to finish. Slumped forward at the shoulders and with his head bent, Logan seemed so sad Henri wanted to hug him.

“No.” Henri reached out, rubbing Logan’s arm through his jacket. “Well, okay, maybe.” If *seeing someone* included sex, then no, Henri wasn’t ready. “I just can’t rush into getting physical.”

Logan’s gaze was fixed on the muddy grass around the tent entrance. He kicked at a rock sticking out of the dirt with the toe of his brand-new boots.

“But I like you.” Henri slid his hand down to Logan’s wrist so he could touch Logan’s skin. He hoped rubbing the pressure point inside Logan’s wrist didn’t count as leading the guy on, because Henri couldn’t seem to stop.

“Like a buddy, though.” Logan’s shrug was small and heartbreaking on his oversized frame.

Henri took Logan’s hand. That much he could do. No way could he transmit an STI by holding hands. “I don’t know... Maybe? Maybe more.”

He shouldn’t agree to anything, especially without knowing what Logan expected to happen in bed, but he wanted to leave the door open instead of slamming it shut.

“You’re not just sayin’ that to be nice?” Logan cocked his eyebrows. It was an expression Henri hadn’t seen from him before, or maybe he simply looked different in his new clothes.

“I’m not that nice.”

Logan barked out a laugh. “Yeah.” He smiled at their joined hands. “I noticed.”

The campfire was different than any Logan had been to back home. First off, everyone stood instead of sacking out on the ground, probably because the grass was too soggy to lay down blankets. Logan craned his head to see the fire, waiting for Henri to bring s'mores from the inner circle.

With the way Henri had held his hand earlier, and how Henri would brush closer when they walked, Logan had reached a place of quiet hopefulness. Okay, so Henri hadn't responded to Logan's advances with a resounding *yes*, but it wasn't a *no*, either. The way Henri had acted over dinner, with shy smiles and flirty winks...it felt like more of a *maybe*. That uncertain anticipation had Logan tingling all over, feeling high with wondering what would happen in their tent. Hell, maybe it was better Henri hadn't jumped right into Logan's sleeping bag. Not like Logan would have known what to do with him when he got there.

"Here." Henri came over with a couple marshmallows pinched between graham crackers. He handed one to Logan, smirking. Moonlight teased at Henri's cheekbones, darkening Henri's eyes.

It was all Logan could do not to kiss him, but instead Logan shoved the s'more in his mouth.

"You going to eat that whole thing?" Henri said it with a hitch to his eyebrow that was pure suggestion.

Logan laughed around his bite, spraying a fine mist of graham cracker crumbs. Oh God, Henri must have thought he was the world's biggest dope. But Henri's smile was kind as he reached up and wiped a bit of chocolate off the edge of Logan's lips.

Damn, Logan wanted to take that finger and suck it into his mouth. No. No way. Henri had said *maybe*. He'd held Logan's hand. Finger sucking was definitely off the menu.

With a coy grin, Henri bit his s'more in half. His shapely lips were all coated in melted marshmallow and chocolate, and Logan wanted to lick it off so badly he could wait a month if he had to.

Somewhere nearby, guys began drumming. Logan couldn't see them, but from the general shift in the air, he could tell that the crowd had gotten excited.

"Oh God." Henri leaned into him, resting his forehead on Logan's shoulder. "I really hate drum circles."

Logan froze, suspended in a place between not believing his luck and being terrified to fuck things up. Henri's hair smelled so good, and his body was lithe and small but also strong and sinewy. Logan wanted to clutch Henri, grab him, haul him closer. With Soleil, it had never been like this. He'd never felt so turned on it was almost scary.

"The drummin' part or the circle part?" Logan forced his voice not to crack. Slowly, he lifted his hand to hover over Henri's back. He waited long seconds, wondering if Henri would pull away. When Henri let out a sigh and relaxed against Logan's chest, he brought his palm to rest between Henri's shoulders.

"Both."

Giving in, Logan dropped his head to rub his cheek against Henri's hair. Oh hell, he could do this—only this—all night. Standing there under the stars just holding Henri...Logan didn't know why he'd worried about blowjobs and fucking and the rest of it.

"Attention!" On the other side of the campfire, Buck stood on a picnic table. He held his hands up, palms out, in the universal sign for quiet down.

The drumming slowed to a low-pitched beat, and the guys lowered their voices.

"It's time for a polar bear dip!" Buck ripped his shirt over his head and beat his fists against his chest.

Okay, this Logan had not been expecting. He looked to Henri for direction, but Henri's mouth hung open in horror.

"Oh, hell no." Henri wound his arms around his torso as if someone might run over and try to tear his clothes off.

All around them, men stripped. Buck waved, pointing at the ridge and the river beyond. Logan hoped all the guys stuck to the section where the water pooled in a lagoon and didn't venture into the river itself. In the dark, it could be dangerous.

"Come on, gentlemen!" After a few shouts from the lesbians in attendance, Buck added, "And ladies."

"You sure you don't want to go?" Logan imagined he knew the answer, but he still had to ask. Maybe it was like river rafting and Henri needed to be cajoled into joining the fun.

"Not if the river were peppermint mocha." Henri cuddled into Logan's side, but whether it was for warmth or because he was as reluctant to let go

as Logan was, Logan couldn't tell. "I'm pretty beat." When Henri tilted his head, their eyes met. "And I bet Michael has all kinds of activities to torture us with tomorrow."

"Yeah." Logan's belly lurched at the idea of lying together in a tent in the dark, but at the same time, his heart kicked up to pounding. "I'm tired too."

One by one, they got their sleep clothes out of their bags, and together they headed to the bathrooms. Logan caught Henri's eye in the bathroom mirror as they stood brushing their teeth. Maybe it was because there was a toothbrush in Henri's mouth and his lips were dripping with toothpaste, but it looked like he was smiling for real, not even a smirk this time. His dark eyes crinkled around the edges and sparkled in the yellow halogen lights.

Every muscle on Logan's body tensed and quivered, like he could run five miles at a sprint. Much as Logan wanted to keep things PG in the tent, he hoped they rubbed off together at the end. Didn't matter if it was an unspoken thing like the night before or a more *together* experience with them whispering encouragement to each other, because otherwise there would be no way in hell Logan would be able to sleep.

He tried not to look when Henri hurried out of his clothes and into his flannel pajamas, but he couldn't miss Henri's long back and the thick hair on his thighs. Logan turned around to change before Henri could catch him watching.

"You want to try to stream something tonight?" Henri came over, both his body language and his gaze more guarded than they'd been before. Maybe Logan had read this whole thing wrong. "If everyone else heads back to the campfire after they swim, we might get the chance." He dragged on a sweater, rubbing his arms. "Or maybe they'll all have hypothermia and fall asleep."

"Sure." Logan hid his disappointment. "Sounds fun."

A few minutes later they climbed into the tent. Maybe it was Logan's imagination, but now that they were in the dark again, Henri seemed to brush against him an awful lot as he adjusted his sleeping bag in the tent.

The drums and men's chatter in the distance sounded tribal, primitive. They spurred Logan on. He should be doing something, he knew this. His palms itched to grab, and his blood pumped like lightning through his veins. If only he could figure out what in the fuck he was supposed to do.

“You really want me to keep this here?” Henri dug in the suitcase that separated their sleep pads. Shadows hid his expression.

“No.” Logan cleared his throat, his voice hoarse with an equal mixture of fear and lust.

Henri must have felt it too, that energy buzzing between them. Logan couldn't be imagining the way Henri's pale billows of breath were slow and rhythmic, or the way Henri kept leaning toward him before pulling away.

“Okay. Then I'll put it down by my feet.” He picked up the bag and twisted, getting on his hands and knees directly in front of Logan. It was all too easy for Logan to imagine lying across his back to kiss his neck.

As if he heard Logan's thoughts, Henri stilled. There was a long, limitless minute while Logan wondered if Henri was waiting for him to do something, maybe crawl over him and do exactly what he was thinking about. Or maybe Henri was gearing up to tell Logan he needed to find somewhere else to sleep.

Henri backed up a few inches, so his heels almost touched Logan's knees. Logan didn't move. Mind gone blank, he held his ground while Henri slowly lifted up to kneeling. Henri's back was to Logan's front, only a foot away.

“Logan?” Henri's voice was more tentative than anything Logan had heard him say so far.

“Yeah?” He would have done anything Henri said right then—slept on the ground, sucked him off, made love to him. Logan would have spread and let Henri fuck him, if that's what Henri wanted.

“If you want...” Henri's words were little more than a breath but still loud in the silence of their tent.

“Yeah?” Logan rasped, unable to think about anything but the tension in Henri's shoulders and the way Henri smelled.

“Just don't kiss me, okay? Not on the lips.”

The sadness in that request shifted something inside Logan, made him soft and liquid, where before he'd been rigid enough to crack. Whatever this asshole Preston had done to Henri, it had been terrible.

“Okay.” Fuck his worries and his hang-ups and all his nervousness over being able to perform. Henri wanted something from him, maybe something deeper and more complicated than just getting off. Logan shoved his own

damn issues to the back of his mind. “I can do that.” He inched closer, scooting on his knees until Henri was against his chest.

Henri accommodated him, widening his stance so Logan could get between his legs. When Logan put his hand softly on Henri’s stomach, Henri leaned back, resting against Logan’s body. “I guess hand jobs would work. But nothing else, okay?” Henri shivered.

Logan wasn’t sure if it was from the cold or something else. “Yeah. Of course.” He bent his head to Henri’s shoulder and pressed his lips to the crook of his neck.

Henri’s skin was soft and a little damp. The flavor filled Logan’s mouth—salty and covered in smoke from the campfire. Wrapping his arm tighter, Logan tugged Henri onto his lap. Henri must have felt his excitement. Logan hoped that was okay, because there was no controlling it, no stopping the way his body reacted.

With Soleil he’d worried there was something wrong with him, that maybe he just couldn’t get it up in general. Logan wanted to laugh out loud at how good he felt—desire mixed with a dizzying rush of relief. Against Henri’s back his little soldier performed like a champ.

Logan had no idea what it would be like jerking off another guy, but it couldn’t be too hard. He’d seen it in pornos more times than he could count. Feeling his way, Logan stroked up Henri’s chest to where his shoulders were boney but strong under fabric. He ran his hand down Henri’s stomach, then over his hips and thighs. It wasn’t until Henri took Logan’s hand and led it between his legs that Logan gave in to his curiosity.

It was right there, hard and demanding, thicker than Logan would have expected given Henri’s frame. It strained the front of Henri’s sleep pants and was hot in Logan’s palm. When Logan squeezed, he felt it on himself, an answering pulse low in his body that made him grind harder into Henri’s back.

Henri bucked into Logan’s fist, letting Logan know he was doing okay. With his right hand, Henri reached back and cupped Logan’s head.

Logan kissed harder, losing himself as he mouthed his way across Henri’s jaw. The stubble tickled his lips and scraped his tongue. He felt dampness through the flannel in his hand. Before he could think to ask, he was searching for Henri’s waistband and pushing his hand down Henri’s pajamas.

“Oh God. Yeah.” Henri rose to his knees, chasing Logan’s touch.

“Damn.” Logan needed his sweatpants out of the way before he made a mess of them. He shoved his sweats to his thighs and dragged Henri against him until the globes of Henri’s ass cradled his base. The smooth, firm flesh of Henri’s back provided the perfect place for Logan to thrust his way to heaven.

Henri made a sound halfway between a gasp and a cry. Logan would have thought he was about to come, except he pulled off.

“What?” Logan covered himself with a T-shirt, panicking that he’d somehow fucked up. “You didn’t want us takin’ our pants off?” He scrambled for an explanation, not knowing how to make things better but wanting to move past whatever he’d done wrong so they could get back to that feeling of being *so damn close*.

“I need to tell you something.” Henri picked up his sleeping bag and draped it over his lap.

Logan followed suit, settling back into his bed. Shit. He had fucked up. Either that or Henri was going to end things between them before they even started.

“Okay,” Logan said slowly, having no choice but to hear Henri out.

Henri bit his lip. “Just don’t be mad at me, okay?”

“Of course not.” He couldn’t imagine what Henri could say to make him angry. Sad, yes, but not angry. They’d only met a day earlier. Even if Henri had some secret boyfriend, it’s not like Henri owed Logan anything. Logan had been lucky to get this far.

“Okay.” Henri let out a long sigh. “Here’s the deal...”

Chapter Seven

“But you don’t have it.”

Henri wished he could see Logan’s expression better and know if he was winding up for some kind of rant. “Well, no. I didn’t when I got tested, but I won’t know for sure until I get another test.”

“When?” Logan shifted closer. He didn’t sound angry. If anything, he sounded... Was that relief? Concern?

“The nurse said three to six weeks.” Henri braced for Logan’s reaction.

“Well, at least that’s not so long.” Logan touched the back of Henri’s hand in a comforting caress. His voice was low and smooth and soothing.

Henri didn’t know how to respond. A few seconds ago it had seemed like Logan was raring to fuck, and now he was being so patient it was like he didn’t care if they had sex. Henri had never been with a guy like this, maybe never even met one. He struggled to catch up and figure out what Logan expected to happen next.

“So, you said hand jobs were okay?” Logan maneuvered so he was at Henri’s side, but a little behind him, how they’d been before when they’d been making out.

“Yeah.” Henri’s tension drained slowly. Apparently, a freak-out wasn’t going to happen. At least not tonight. “It’s all about mucus membranes. That’s what the nurse said. Mouths... Lower areas.”

Logan scooted closer, coming right up behind Henri. His chest was broad and strong. His hands were gentle, but there was nothing soft or tentative about the heat against Henri’s lower back.

“So as long as our mouths aren’t touchin’...” Logan kissed his shoulder. He reached between Henri’s legs, to the part of him that had ducked for cover the second he thought Logan was going to press them together in ways that could get Logan sick.

One stroke of that wide palm, even with his pajama pants in the way, and Henri was fully hard.

Logan mouthed his ear, his voice a low murmur. “And as long as we don’t bump uglies...” He pressed under Henri’s waistband. The anticipation was so thick it felt like honey, and then Logan closed his fist around him and stroked.

Henri struggled to find his voice, when all he could do was shut his eyes and whimper. “Yeah. That’s pretty much it.”

“We can work with that.” Logan managed to sound encouraging and sexy all at the same time.

Weird, because Henri had thought those two things were mutually exclusive. “I guess.” He reached back, palming Logan’s hip, wordlessly telling him to get his pants out of the way. “Here.” Henri shuffled so his legs were on the inside of Logan’s, and Logan’s bare cock would hit Henri’s spine instead of his ass.

No mucus membranes there. Henri leaned back. “I can get you next,” he whispered, letting Logan know he wasn’t planning to be selfish. “If you can’t get off this way.”

“Oh, I don’t think that’s gonna be a problem.” Logan’s laugh rumbled, sweet and sexy as anything. “As long as you don’t mind a mess on your back.”

Henri twisted so he could land a kiss on Logan’s neck, right below his jaw. He tasted like smoke and rain, with the faint sweetness of graham cracker crumbs. “Of course I don’t.” He tugged up Logan’s shirt so it wasn’t in the way.

Logan worked it over his head. His chest heated Henri’s skin, and his arm was firm around Henri’s belly. Henri groaned at the feel of him everywhere, keeping him warm in the chilly night air.

“Here.” Logan pressed his palm to Henri’s mouth, urging him to lick.

Henri swallowed past a lump in his throat. His skin felt too thin, like Logan could have seen right through him if he wanted.

“C’mon.” Logan’s voice was teasing, as if he had no idea what he was doing to Henri, the way he twisted Henri’s insides to jelly with his careful concern. “Get my fingers wet.”

Henri forced back his rush of feelings so he wouldn’t turn into a desperate whimpering mess. With how briefly they’d known each other, Logan didn’t deserve to deal with all of Henri’s craziness. He filled his mouth with spit and used his tongue to slather it over Logan’s hand.

The wet sound of Logan's jerking filled the tent. He must have been taking notes on Henri's groans because his technique—which had been messy and rough at first—got better by the second.

Logan held Henri to his body, a slow, increasingly wet grind on his back. "God, you're so good at this," Logan whispered in his ear.

If he wasn't an inch from coming, Henri might have laughed. He wasn't doing anything special, just clutching the back of Logan's head and thrusting into the tunnel of Logan's tight, sure grip.

Henri's thighs clenched, the buzz working through his belly and tingling the end of his dick. Logan's palm dragged over that spot under his cap again and again until Henri was bouncing and begging for him to go faster, for him to do that twist and drag that would push Henri over the edge.

"*Fuuuuu...*" Logan bit his shoulder.

Henri felt the splash on his back. His own orgasm curled him forward, dragging Logan with him. Logan stopped stroking and held him with perfect pressure while colors flashed behind Henri's eyelids and his breath came out in a whine.

The come was on his lap and in Logan's hand, but Henri was pretty sure none of it had gotten on anything they needed to sleep in.

"Wow." Logan's chest bounced in a chuckle. "It's messy when you're both guys, huh?"

"Yeah." Henri forced his muscles to work well enough to grab his dirty shirt out of the corner and wipe himself off. He would have collapsed had it not been for Logan still holding him upright.

He might have offered his shirt to Logan too, but he wasn't quite clear on the mingling of bodily fluids. Henri was glad when Logan took the initiative and grabbed something of his own to clean up.

When they were both wiped off, Logan dragged Henri down onto the sleeping pads. He put one arm under Henri's head, cuddling along Henri's body. "So," he said with a yawn. "Do guys expect pillow talk, or is it cool if everyone falls asleep?"

Henri smiled. It was cold in the tent, but heat radiated off Logan's body, so Henri decided to wait to put his clothes back on. "Falling asleep is fine. But, you know, it's only ten. You'll probably wake up bored at two in the morning if you sack out now."

“Yeah.” Logan’s breath ruffled his hair and tickled his ear. “But I could wake you up later so we could do it again.” He got on his side, elbow cocked under him, and looked down at Henri’s face like he couldn’t believe his luck.

“No way.” Henri scoffed, because that much adoration was a little scary. “You wake me up in the middle of the night, and you die. We may as well get that out of the way right now.”

“Ah, well. I’ll have to keep you awake for round two.” Logan played with a piece of Henri’s hair, purring like a contented cat. “So, I never asked—what are you studyin’ in school?”

“Economics.” He hoped Logan didn’t dig too deep as to why Henri had chosen the major, since the further Henri got in school the more he wondered how he’d use anything he learned in real life. Sure, the models and theories he studied were interesting, in an abstract kind of way, but without a graduate degree, he had no idea how he’d find a job that used his knowledge. Even if that was the kind of job he wanted.

“Cool.” Logan pulled a sleeping bag across the both of them, oblivious to Henri’s bout of worries over his post-college career choices. “And Tomas says you’re graduatin’ soon?”

“Yeah.” Henri grabbed his pajamas and pulled them up his legs, wanting suddenly to get out of the conversation. Logan may have been two years younger, but he had a real job. One that actually helped people.

Unlike Henri, who’d only ever worked at Speedy Coffee and the Buffalo Exchange. Slinging lattes or hawking used clothing? Neither were great prospects for a guy who’d gotten a bachelor’s from a top school. “Only a few weeks left. Then summer.”

“Do you, uh, know what you’re gonna do? After graduation?”

Henri sighed, wondering whether to give Logan the real answer or the one that sounded more impressive. He decided to aim somewhere in the middle. “My dad wants me to work for his law firm, but I haven’t decided yet.” Dealing with his father’s constant criticism was bad enough when he wasn’t working for the guy. Then there was the fact that Henri had about zero interest in copyright law.

“Oh.”

Henri hoped like hell Logan wasn’t passing judgment on him. Not a lot of people could afford to turn down a steady paycheck, and Henri would

hate for Logan to think he was planning to live off a trust fund or something. “I work with Jesse over at this coffee shop on the Ave, and I guess I could pick up more hours once school’s out.” He laughed to cover how nervous the conversation was making him. “I’ll have to if I want to find an apartment.” Truth was, he had no idea if his boss could afford to give him more work, but fuck if Henri would admit to being a bum.

“That’s cool. I mean, you don’t need to decide right away.” Logan’s expression shifted to something more closed off. “I mean, once you get into something, you can’t always get out all that easily. Don’t want to commit and then find out later you made a mistake.”

“Yeah. Exactly.” Relieved that Logan wasn’t going to call him a spoiled brat, Henri adjusted his position so he was spooned against Logan’s front. “I just want to make the right decision.” He said it to himself more than Logan, trying to justify his reasoning for not having sent his resume to his father’s HR person yet.

Too bad he hadn’t sent a resume anywhere else, either. God, he was so screwed he couldn’t even think about it. Hopefully, if worst came to worst, someone would be hiring at The Gap.

Yes! Logan’s chest was so puffed up with pride as he walked across the campground to the restaurant that he was surprised a big S wasn’t shining from it. He’d had sex with a man. Okay, not sex exactly. But he’d gotten Henri off. It hadn’t even been difficult. Logan was, like, the cock whisperer. He wanted to high-five every guy he saw.

Steam coated the camp café’s door and windows, so Logan shrugged off his jacket as he got in line behind a couple of girls. Three-quarters of the tables were filled with guys he knew from the camping group, but the rest were other people. In the corner by the opposite door, two middle-aged guys read papers in between scowling at various gay couples. To his surprise, Logan didn’t care about their disgust. He only wished Henri was there to make some wisecrack comment.

The door jingled open and Tomas walked in, trailed by his boyfriend. “Hey.” Jesse smiled and waved. “G’orning.”

“Mornin’.” Logan pinched his lips together to hide his smile.

“Had a good night?” Tomas sported a shit-eating grin and two days’ worth of stubble. His eyes sparkled like he had a good idea what Logan and Henri had spent the night doing. “You guys turned in early last night.”

“Yeah.” Logan acted casual when he was bursting to spill to Tomas how great he was in bed. “River raftin’ yesterday got us pretty whooped.” When the girls ahead of him paid for their orders, Logan stepped up to the counter. He got coffee for Henri and a juice for himself.

“I’ve got to use the bathroom.” Jesse gestured to the coffee. “Is Henri coming, or you want me to swing by and drop that at the tent?”

“Could you take it?” Logan held out the disposable cup. “He’s workin’ on a paper for school.”

“Sure.” Jesse backed out the door, balancing Henri’s and his coffees in his hands.

Tomas watched him for a second before turning back to Logan with a wicked smirk. “So. Now that he’s gone...” He led the way to a free table and fell into a seat.

Logan slid into a chair across from him. “Okay, I like him. Are you happy?” He played it tough, like he didn’t want to kiss and tell. Not like there had been any kissing...

“Like him, huh?” Tomas leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms, looking smug.

“Asshole.” Even with how Tomas was riding him, Logan couldn’t stop grinning. “Oh, hey...” Logan wondered if he had the balls to come right out and ask. “Do you have any...?” His face heated. No. He couldn’t.

“You asking me for condoms or lube?”

If Logan’s neck got any hotter, he’d need to jump in the river. “Uh...the second. I have the first one.” He’d brought a whole pack, in case he’d have the opportunity to use them, but hadn’t really thought through all the details.

“Good, because Jesse and I don’t use ’em.” Tomas cracked his knuckles, clearly bragging. Jeez, the guy was conceited when it came to his boyfriend.

Then again, hooking up with Henri had made Logan feel about ten feet tall, so Logan guessed he was in no position to judge. “Well, if I could borrow, that would be cool...” Yeah, he was being presumptuous as hell, but it’s not like he and Henri *had* to use the supplies. Maybe Henri would chill a little about the herpes thing if he knew Logan had stuff for safe sex.

“Sure thing, man.” Tomas’s phone beeped in his pocket, and he pulled it out. Checking the screen, he gave Logan the universal sign for “give me a second” and headed outside.

Relieved to be alone, Logan got his tablet from his backpack and took advantage of the restaurant’s stellar Internet. He typed *Herpes Simplex Virus* into his search engine. After glancing around the restaurant to make sure no one was watching, Logan studied every last page.

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Chapter Eight

“Knock, knock.” Jesse rustled the tent. “Hello?”

“Yeah?” Henri saved his work and set down his computer to knee-walk to the tent’s opening. Shoving aside the rain fly, he craned his head to see his friend. “What’s up?”

“Brought coffee.” Jesse held up a couple cups. “I’ve gotta pee like a racehorse, though. Mind if I leave them here?”

“It’s okay. I was about done.” Henri clamored out of the tent, shoving his feet in his shoes as he went. As soon as Henri’d grabbed his coffee, Jesse took off across the field, jogging to the bathrooms.

“Thanks!” Henri called.

Over his shoulder, Jesse answered, “Logan got it.”

Henri brought his computer with him to the picnic table. He’d turned his wireless off to avoid the temptation of the Internet, but since his paper was almost finished, he decided to log on. There were emails and updates, typical Internet kittens and porn links. On his Facebook feed, he noticed an update from his old manager at the Buffalo Exchange.

Truth was, the clothing store was more likely to have extra shifts than Speedy Coffee. Unless Michael quit, and Henri didn’t think he would since Michael was starting graduate school in the fall, Henri would still only have sixteen hours per week of work.

He rattled off a message to his old manager, asking if they were hiring, either on the Ave or at the store on Broadway, and snapped his laptop shut before he could see whether she replied.

Rising to stand, Henri took in the day. A solid mat of clouds spanned the sky, but the morning air was warm. A few guys mulled around the campground, and birds chirped, but otherwise it was totally quiet.

Henri got a towel out of the tent and hurried across the field to the bathrooms. The shower’s partial walls hid him from view of the door while he undressed. Feeding quarter after Canadian quarter into the machine, he huddled under the lukewarm trickle, waiting for the water to heat.

When he was finally warm enough to move, Henri perched his shaving mirror on the soap dish and lathered up his face. He hadn't seen himself in a couple days and was amused to find he'd grown a sparse goatee that made him look like a cartoon villain.

Propping a foot against the wall, he tilted his mirror so he could see under his balls. The halogens were out by the sinks, and though daylight streamed from the open section of wall overhead, it was nowhere near bright enough for Henri to tell whether there were red dots hidden amidst the short hairs growing on his ass.

Damn. Henri would just have to trust there wasn't anything wrong *down there*. After all, it's not like anything hurt or itched.

He scratched his chest, where his hair had grown out in the middle and fur now connected the little circles around his nipples and led in a faint line down to his belly. He'd been getting waxed for so long that he'd never seen himself with full body hair. Sometime between fifteen and twenty-three, he'd grown up without noticing.

He heard guys filing into the bathroom, so Henri shut off the hot water before anyone could see his awkward game of Twister.

Outside and dressed, Henri caught sight of a familiar head of blond hair. Logan stood over by Rain and Gray, his jacket tied around his hips and his short sleeves folded above his shoulders. He looked like he belonged at a tailgate party, but somehow the style worked.

When Henri made his way over, Logan gave him a big smile. "Hey." He reached for Henri and pulled him into a hug. "I was lookin' for you. You weren't at the tent, so I figured you must have come over here." Logan treated him like they were dating, which should have been weird, but wasn't.

Henri curled into Logan's side, taking in the mellow scent of his clothes. He was gaining an appreciation for the way Logan smelled—fresh and soapy, like trees and moss.

"You guys want some food?" Gray came over with a couple bowls. He handed one to Henri and the other to Logan.

Inside, there was some chili, covered in cheese and tortilla chips.

Henri's mouth watered. Back in Seattle, he drank three lattes a morning and skipped breakfast. Apparently, fresh air and activity gave a guy an appetite for more than caffeine and flavored milk.

“Thanks.” Logan dug in. “You guys playin’ in the pick-up game?” He gestured to the middle of the field, where some men were setting up traffic cones.

“What, soccer?” Rain came walking over with his own mug. Bits of cheese decorated the stubble on his lip.

Gray grinned at his boyfriend, his smile shining so bright he looked like a California surfer boy who’d gotten shipwrecked in the north. With a playful pass of his hands, he wiped Rain’s face. “Nah. It’s touch football.”

Rain frowned. “Did you sign me up?”

If Henri had thought Gray was smiling before, it was nothing compared to the maniacal gleam in his eye now. “Yeah.”

“Oh, c’mon, man. It’ll be fun.” Logan took a few more bites of his food, then dipped his finger in his cup to wipe out the bottom. “What position did you play?”

Henri jerked his head to figure out who Logan was talking to. Rain, with his long hair and worn hiking clothes, didn’t seem like the type to have ever *watched* a football game, much less played one.

“He was a quarterback in high school!” Gray said with obvious glee.

“Cool.” Logan didn’t miss a beat. If he realized how weird it was that a long-haired-hippie gay kid had played football in high school, he didn’t say anything about it. “I was a runnin’ back.”

“I wasn’t good or anything.” Rain’s face blushed as red as his hair. “Our high school was really small. We wouldn’t have had a football team except that we needed three boys’ sports teams to keep up our charter status.”

Someone blew a whistle in the middle of the field, signaling the start of the game, so Logan jogged in that direction. Rain went more reluctantly, glaring daggers at his boyfriend over his shoulder.

“Come on, let’s find a place to sit.” Gray grabbed a blanket out of one of their bins and slung it under his arm. When they got to the picnic table by the field, Rain laid the blanket on top for them to sit on.

For a sport supposedly for straight guys, there seemed to be a lot of men squatting with their asses in one another’s faces. It almost made Henri wish he’d agreed to play, but then a guy blew a whistle and the players began shoving, pushing and running, seemingly without any rhyme or reason.

Rain threw the ball, and wow. The guy really had an arm. Henri turned to Gray, expecting to see surprise, and found Gray watching the field with a

dreamy, unfocused expression on his face.

Logan ran alongside the guy holding the ball, and when it seemed like someone was going to take the ball from the runner, the guy tossed it off to Logan—who sprinted a dozen steps before someone from the opposite team got to him. The touch turned into a trip then a tackle.

The two men went down in the mud, rolling on the ground.

“Oops.” Gray laughed.

Henri didn’t think it was funny at all. He got to his feet, trying to get a better view of where Logan was rubbing the dirt out of his clothes.

Logan caught sight of him and gave him a big smile and a good-natured wave. If Logan was hurt, he didn’t show it. Henri let out a breath of relief.

There was some discussion on the field, and they must have decided one team would be shirts and the other skins, because Logan and some of the other guys pulled off their tops to go bare-chested.

Spectators gathered around the edges of the field, in no small part because a lot of the topless guys were hot. Henri shouldn’t have gotten such a rush out of other people appreciating his hookup for the weekend, but he did. His blood pumped hard, and he could barely contain his smirk. Yeah, that sweaty badass on the field was sharing his tent.

“Oh, damn.” Gray pointed to where Rain had gotten tackled by another player. Rain was flat on his ass, hair falling out of his ponytail. When he stood up slowly, like some Viking warrior, Gray bit his lip and let out a little groan.

The air smelled fresh and clean, and the noises on the field were like grunts from sex. Henri watched Logan run, the agile way he spun to avoid another player. No doubt about it, Logan could be pretty dreamy. It almost made Henri wonder what would happen when they got back to Seattle—*almost*, because anything to do with the future lately was giving Henri hives.

“Hey, what’s up with the Frisbee?” Gray pointed overhead.

Someone must have been playing another game nearby, because a disc flew over the heads of the football players, high enough that none of the guys on the field noticed.

There was a dog chasing it, and Henri saw the coming collision like it was in slow motion.

Logan ran...looking behind him for a pass...

“Oh God.” Henri winced, not sure whether he was more worried about the dog or Logan, but at the last minute Logan must have seen the mutt, because he twisted out of the way.

Another guy smacked into him. The sound of their colliding bodies rang across the field with a sickening crunch. Someone howled, but Henri didn’t know which of the guys it was. He couldn’t hear anything over the rush of blood pumping in his ears as he sprinted across the field.

“Oh God.” Henri slid to kneeling at Logan’s side. The other guy had already rolled off, but Logan lay in the dirt, gasping.

“Are you okay?” Panicked, Henri spun his attention around. Was this where someone was supposed to call 9-1-1? Oh God, was it even still 9-1-1 in Canada? “Can you breathe? Can you feel your feet?”

“Mmmmm’okay,” Logan said through gritted teeth. “Fuck. That hurt like a bitch.” He rolled partway to sitting.

“Should you be moving? Should someone call the paramedics?” Henri pulled off his sweatshirt and draped it across Logan’s bare shoulders. There was a wide red mark running along the side of his neck and down to his chest, probably a scrape from the other guy’s jacket.

“Nah.” Logan did his best to smile, though it turned more into a grimace. “I’m an EMT, remember?”

“I thought you were a fireman.” Henri got under Logan’s arm to help him stand.

“Had to get EMT trainin’ first.” Logan limped, letting Henri lead him to the picnic table. “I’m bruised as hell, but nothin’s broken.”

Henri sucked in a breath and blew it out again, trying to calm down, but his hands kept fluttering. “Do you want to take a shower? Or lie down?” He wished they were back in Seattle where he could set Logan in front of the television and dote on him until he could be sure Logan was better.

“Yeah.” Logan leaned against the table, his breathing heavy. “Maybe both.”

“Shit, man. You okay?” Tomas jogged up to his side.

Jesse hovered behind. “That looked bad. You want some aspirin?”

Henri got behind Logan, wrapping his arms around him. He didn’t care if it made them look like a couple, or what this meant about the future. He’d been worried about his big guy.

Logan settled into Henri's arms. "Aspirin would be good," he said to no one in particular. He must not have been too hurt because he moved to talk in Henri's ear. "You want to join me in that shower?"

"It is so not my fault if you catch herpes." Henri's skin was smooth with soapy water, and their bodies jostled together as they fought to get under the showerhead. The bathrooms were empty, but even if they weren't, Logan wouldn't have cared. Being close to Henri and naked was worth every twitch when they heard someone using the urinals outside. That, and, okay—being in public was turning Logan on.

"I know what I'm doin'." Logan bent his knees to kiss water out of the dip in Henri's collarbone. His skin burned all over from scrapes, and his ribs were bruised on his side, but Logan would have taken a much harder hit to get Henri crawling all over him like he'd been since the game.

"In fact..." he nibbled his way up Henri's neck, "...I looked it up, and it's fine if we kiss."

Their cocks were hard between them, but Henri kept shifting so they wouldn't rub. He stepped back, hair wet and dripping, and eyes wide with concern. "No way. You can get oral herpes from kissing. I know this."

"Yeah." Logan cupped Henri's face and ran a thumb over his lips. Jesus, the things he wanted to do with that pouty little mouth. Logan was surprised he wasn't struck down by lightning just for imagining. "But HSV2 is genital herpes. You can get it on your mouth from going down on someone, but it doesn't transfer from one mouth to another."

What Logan hadn't understood online, he'd learned quickly enough from a phone call to an STI hotline. Yeah, he and Henri had to be careful, but it wasn't in Logan's nature to worry when he didn't have to.

"And you know this because?"

Logan spun Henri so he could grind into Henri's back and rub Henri's cock at the same time. Looking over Henri's shoulder, he watched Henri's fat, ruddy head peeking out over his fist. "Because I'm smart, that's why."

The hot water faltered, and Henri rushed to shove their last quarter in the machine.

"We'll talk about it back in the tent, okay?" Henri got on tiptoe to kiss Logan's cheek. He rinsed off the last of his soap.

“Fine, fine.” Logan grabbed his towel.

After a chilly jog across the field in nothing more than shorts and towels, they made it to the tent. Henri climbed in first, crawling under his sleeping bag.

Logan followed.

Despite their shower, bits of dirt marred Henri’s damp skin. Logan kissed the grit off his shoulder. He didn’t want to touch lips until Henri said it was okay, but he arched forward until their hips brushed through their underwear.

“Mmmm...” Henri’s eyes fluttered closed. Blue veins crisscrossed his eyelids and under his eyes, and his lips were parted, pink and pretty. Logan wanted nothing more than to take ownership of that mouth.

“So what about it?” Logan teased. “Can I kiss you?”

Henri blocked his lips with the back of his hand. Wide eyes looked out at Logan from over Henri’s fist. “You’ll hate me, chéri. Seriously, you’ll hate me if you catch something.”

Logan thought about it, weighing Henri’s words. “Well, I might hate you if you didn’t tell me. But I know the risks.”

“I know.” Henri hid his face with both hands. “But...would you be pissed if I said I don’t want you to?”

“No.” Logan didn’t even have to think about his answer. He pulled Henri’s arms away, urging him to meet his gaze.

What he found surprised him. Henri’s expression was nervous and his lips tight. He...he couldn’t have been actually scared.

“Of course I won’t be pissed.” Clearly, someone had seriously fucked with Henri’s idea of what was a normal reaction to expect from people.

“Can you please trust me not to be a complete asshole?”

Henri swallowed. There was a red tinge to his eyes, and Logan wondered if it was from the shower or if he was about to cry.

“Oh Jesus.” Logan didn’t know what he’d done to make Henri upset, but he still felt like shit. “Crap.” He gathered Henri close, rubbing his back and waiting for him to talk.

After what felt like a long time, Henri whispered, “I didn’t mean to freak out.”

“It’s fine.” Logan hugged him tighter. “No big deal.”

Henri sniffled. He seemed small when he did that, tiny compared to his larger-than-life bitchy attitude. “I know it’s lame, making out with a guy who can’t do stuff. If you want to maybe try again...in a few weeks, if you haven’t started seeing anyone by then.”

“I don’t see that happenin’.” Maybe Logan should have kept his feelings secret, acted like he didn’t give a shit and played hard to get, but Logan wasn’t that sophisticated. He liked Henri so much—a lot more than he thought he could like a guy after only two days. “I doubt I’ll find someone better in the next few weeks.”

“No?” Henri asked, a wicked lilt in his voice. “I’d think you’d want to work your way through every club in Capitol Hill.”

“It’s not like I can go in anyway.” Logan’s lust kicked up now that Henri was doing better. He hoped all this talk about feelings was over so they could get back to making out. “Not until August.”

“God, I keep forgetting.” Henri snorted lightly. “Wow, I’m really robbing the cradle.” He got with the program, lying back on his camping pad and pulling Logan on top.

A burst of rain came down outside, popping the surface of the tent.

“Not really. How old are you?” Logan stroked a hand down Henri’s side, feeling sharp ribs underneath.

“Twenty-three.” Henri copied him, pressing a palm over Logan’s belly, then lower to his hipbone.

“Even if you are old, I’d do you.” He rolled so Henri could straddle Logan’s hips. Craning his head up, Logan kissed Henri’s cheeks, his neck. Logan rested his hands lower than Henri’s waist, at the top of the curve to his ass. “Now, are you gonna let me get you off or not?”

Henri circled his hips, grinding against Logan’s erection. “Jeez, you’re pushy.” Henri ruined the effect of his smirk by wiping away a tear.

They were both in only briefs, and Logan could feel everything through the cotton—the rub of Henri’s ass and the clench of his thighs. He pulled the front of Henri’s underwear down so he could jerk him off.

Henri gave a breathy and surprised-sounding, “Yee-haw.”

“You’re funny.” Logan bent his arm behind his head so he could show off his torso.

“Yeah?” Henri did a tight swivel that made Logan feel like his brains were going to shoot out his tip.

Hell, yeah, yee-haw. Logan smoothed the precome down from Henri's cap. "Is it weird to say I can't wait until we fuck?"

Henri smiled, eyes sneaky as a demon's. "Is it weird to say I wish you'd finger me?"

Logan must have been grinning to his ears. "Nah. Not weird at all." He rotated so Henri was on his back, and then reached for Tomas's lube. When Logan produced the bottle, Henri's mouth dropped open.

"Where did a nice boy like you get something like that?"

"From Tomas." He was so proud it felt like his lungs might expand like a balloon, lifting the whole damn tent. "I thought you might like it."

"Presumptuous," Henri said in a snotty tone. He kicked off his briefs and cocked his leg up, so Logan figured he was only joking.

"What can I say?" Logan settled next to him. Once again, he was drawn to Henri's lips but took a detour to his jaw. "I'm eager to learn."

It was easy enough to deal with the lube while hiding any wincing of embarrassment. Logan stroked wetness into Henri's crease, pressing lightly against his rim. The muscles softened under Logan's touch so that he slid a finger into Henri's body.

"Mmmm..." Henri writhed next to him, obviously enjoying himself. He reached for Logan's cock, rubbing him through his underwear until his strokes were matching time with the pulse of Logan's finger.

"So fuckin' hot." Logan slowly withdrew to add more lube and a second finger. He pressed deeper into Henri's body, feeling the give of muscles and the way Henri tensed and relaxed only to tense again on a groan.

"Not bad...for a straight boy." Henri let his legs fall wide.

Logan took the opportunity to get further on top and drive his cock into Henri's hip. "Straight, but not narrow." He rotated his wrist, finding that spot he knew felt so good.

"Motherfucker." Henri jerked, biting his lip. He looked sexy and desperate and like someone Logan couldn't resist kissing.

He chanced a peck, right at the edge of Henri's lips, testing to see how far Henri's resolve would stretch. "Can you come like this?" Logan rubbed slowly but firmly, watching for Henri's reaction. Just because something felt good to Logan didn't mean Henri would enjoy it.

"Why?" Henri blinked at Logan like he was seeing him for the first time. "Can you?"

“Sometimes.” Logan kissed his way across Henri’s collarbone, hoping Henri hadn’t seen him blush.

“Oh God.” Henri flung his head back.

Logan didn’t know if Henri’s excitement was over Logan liking ass play or whether he’d just done something right with his fingers, but he didn’t care. With lips trembling and his body straining for release, Henri was the hottest thing Logan had ever seen.

“Fuck yeah, baby.” Logan’s whole body felt alive and sensitive, like he wanted to be inside Henri and have Henri inside of him, and for the two of them to fuck each other until they were both sore.

“Oh God, oh God, oh God.” Henri arched off the sleeping pad and stayed there. He gasped over and over, like he was a second from coming but couldn’t reach it. Logan took his time, rubbing slow and deep, knowing he’d get Henri there eventually.

“Mother—” Henri screamed, come spurting onto his belly.

Logan covered Henri’s mouth, letting him shout all he wanted into Logan’s palm. Henri’s breath was hot and moist.

“—fucker.” Henri slithered down Logan’s body, pulling Logan’s dick out of his briefs.

For a second Logan thought Henri would go down on him and Logan wouldn’t have the strength to stop him, but instead Henri kissed his belly—big, openmouthed kisses—while he jerked Logan off in rapid-fire pulls.

“Where’s the lube?” Henri said from his navel. He reached for the bottle, slicked up his fist and proceeded to give Logan the best hand job he’d ever imagined.

Slippery fingers, firm touch, Henri’s hair and lips rubbing his belly. Logan’s groan ended in a gasp, and for all he knew, his come landed in Henri’s hair.

Logan dragged Henri up, not giving a shit if they were both covered in lube and worse. He only cared that Henri was plastered to his side.

Henri stared at the top of the tent, at the fabric dipping and jumping from the force of the rain. Damn, that had felt good, sexy and rough and to Henri’s surprise better than anything he’d done in the past year with Preston. Maybe Henri had come that hard when he was younger once or

twice, but he didn't remember it. And that had only been Logan's fingers. He couldn't imagine what it would be like if Logan fucked him for real.

Logan wiped him off with some dirty piece of clothing. They probably should have taken another shower, but the run across the field to the bathrooms would use up valuable dry clothes.

That, and Henri was out of quarters.

"Damn." Logan hummed the *m*. "A man could get used to this. Fuck Seattle, let's stay here."

Henri smiled and pulled his sleeping bag over his hips. It was damp in spots from his wet hair or their wet towels. Hopefully body heat would dry it overnight. "I doubt this tent is up to handling the elements."

As if to underline the point, a gust of wind sounded outside and a fresh bout of rain ripped across the top of the tent, shaking their thin walls.

"I bet you're right." Logan dropped onto his back next to Henri, bare-chested and gorgeous. "Doubt it would stand up to a heavy snow."

How had Henri not noticed how good-looking Logan was before? The sweetness, yeah Henri had seen that from the start, but maybe he'd assumed Logan being nice meant he'd be mediocre in the sack.

Whatever Henri's reasoning, he'd been dead wrong.

In bed, Logan was a totally different person—aggressive, assertive and maybe even a tad ruthless. Mixed with the funny and endearing part of his personality, Logan's sex appeal was almost overwhelming. Henri didn't know if he could handle being with someone so perfect. What would happen when Henri inevitably fucked it all up? Then he'd have ruined it with someone awesome, rather than someone who was just good in bed.

"So." Logan rolled onto his side and gave Henri a smile that smoothed out the rough edges of Henri's emotions. "It's too early to go to bed. And we can't go outside for a while." His grin got bigger, turning into a flat-out leer. "What do you want to do to pass the time?"

Of all the fucking times to not be able to have sex... Henri didn't know if he could handle being with Logan without screwing, with nothing to get between Henri and his insecurities. "I don't know."

"I s'pose strip poker is out of the question." Logan reached under Henri's sleeping bag and cupped his balls.

"Yeah," Henri answered breathlessly. His body was reacting already. Not that he was hard yet, but he could definitely imagine getting there in the

not-too-distant future. “How about Truth or Dare?”

Logan’s eyes sparkled, and he dove in to kiss Henri’s jaw. “Hell yeah.” He curled up to sitting, back straight like he’d just gotten to class. “Who gets to go first?”

“Hey, ground rules.” Relieved to be past his moment of self-doubt, Henri dragged on his pants. Probably best to be wearing clothes in case he needed leverage. “No making me stand outside in the rain.”

“Aw, c’mon.” Logan laughed, reaching across to tickle him. “I’d keep you warm after.”

Henri’s heart fluttered, like a butterfly that had taken off hoping Logan would catch it. At the same time, it was like the ground had fallen out from under his feet.

“No.” Henri wagged his finger. “Nothing that would make me cold. That’s the rule.”

“Fine.” Grinning, Logan crossed his legs under him and settled on his camping pad. “So, who gets to go first? I think it should be me.”

Henri blanched at the wolfish expression on Logan’s face. He had a sneaking suspicion this game was going to get vicious pretty fast. “Fine, then. Truth.”

Chapter Nine

“What happened with your ex?” Logan watched Henri carefully for his reaction.

“He cheated on me.” Henri’s expression was deadpan, emotionless. Logan could tell he hadn’t wanted to answer at all.

“Yeah.” Logan dragged the word out an extra beat or two, encouraging him to go on. “Okay. But...did you suspect it, or was it out of the blue?” He shouldn’t have cared, but Logan did. Who was this guy who’d made Henri so twitchy? More importantly, what did the guy have that had made Henri stay?

Henri dropped his gaze, and it was a long moment before he answered. “Well, I didn’t *know*, if that’s what you mean. It’s not like I set up a sting to prove he was cheating. One day he just told me he’d met someone else.”

Logan rubbed his legs to keep warm, but then decided it was a little cold to stay naked, so he pulled on a sweatshirt. “But it doesn’t sound like you were surprised.”

“No.” Henri sighed. “I mean, he wasn’t exactly the most honest person. He always had one girl or another that he took with him to office events. Most of them knew he was gay, but not all.” Henri rolled his eyes. “And he started hooking up with me when he was dating someone else. So... Well, the precedent was kind of there.”

“Oh. Well then, yeah.” Logan frowned, not sure how he felt. Henri’s ex was a jerk, but Henri had played a role too. Maybe they’d both been at fault. “Sounds like you’re better off without him.”

The flicker of pain in Henri’s eyes told Logan to back off before he hurt Henri’s feelings. “Okay.” Logan patted his camping mat like he was laying down a bet. “My turn. Truth.”

Henri rubbed his chin, rolling his gaze over Logan like he was trying to figure out a soft place to aim. “What was it like sleeping with a girl?”

Without meaning to, Logan folded his knees to his chest. Weird. He hadn’t thought he was so sensitive about it. But that part of his life—having

sex, or trying to have sex with Soleil—festered in his mind like a wound that wouldn't heal. She'd been a virgin when they'd started dating. Logan had always hoped she didn't know sex was supposed to work better.

“Well, since I haven't exactly had sex with a man yet, I'm not sure I can make a comparison.” *Way to avoid the question, Champ.*

Henri cocked his eyebrows, his lips twisting into a calculating smirk. “I mean, did it feel good? Did you come? Did you think about guys? Are you bi?” He leaned farther forward on each question, his eyes growing wide.

“Um.” Logan eased back a couple inches. “Well, I guess it felt good, yeah.” His cock and balls tucked into his body at the memory.

Soleil was gorgeous, and smart and funny. Logan had loved hanging out with her. Nothing about her appearance turned him off. It was that sense of failure. Feeling like he'd let her down again and again. She never said anything, but he knew. He knew it in those quiet sounds she made in their bed, when she'd masturbate but didn't want him to hear.

“But you didn't like it?” Henri tilted his head to the side, his expression more concerned than challenging.

Logan shrugged. “I did sometimes.” Under the force of Henri's stare, he caved. “But not usually.” He lowered his voice, not sure if he could stand meeting Henri's eyes but unable to focus anywhere else. “I couldn't come all that often.”

The rain streamed down the tent's wall, drowning the sound of his confession. Henri knocked Logan's knee with his foot, smiling like he wanted to cheer Logan up. “Since that wasn't anywhere near as titillating as I was hoping for...” he took a big and dramatic breath, “...I think I should get another chance.”

Logan cracked a smile. “Fine, but it has to be a dare.”

“Goody.” Henri rubbed his hands together. He rolled up to his knees and started dragging on shirts. “Get naked.”

“Why?” Logan pulled his sleeping bag tighter around his hips. Undressing while someone else dressed never seemed like a good idea.

“For your dare, silly.” Jacket on, Henri got in the doorway of the tent and pushed his feet into his shoes. “You can bring a towel, though.”

“You are so gonna get it.” Logan got his underwear off his ankles. “I get a dare on you after this.” An idea formed in his head for exactly what that

dare was going to be. Suddenly, Logan's blood pumped hot enough to handle whatever Henri had cooked up.

He climbed out of the tent after Henri, towel around his hips. Rain peppered his head and shoulders.

"Okay." Henri raised his voice. "You're going to run to the river and jump in."

If it wasn't for the sparkle in his eyes making Henri the cutest thing Logan had ever seen, Logan would have said no. Maybe Logan really wanted his shot at a dare, or maybe he just wanted to show Henri he was tough, but Logan took off at a sprint across the field, barefooted so he wouldn't get his boots wet on the run back.

"Hey. Wait up. I want to see this." Henri ran after him.

With Logan's longer legs, he crested the hill first. He dropped the towel at the edge of the lagoon that pooled off the side of the river. It was man-made and couldn't have reached past Logan's belly at its deepest point.

Logan stepped in, unsurprised when a violent chill rushed up his body. The air might have been around sixty-five degrees, but the river was runoff from snow pack on the mountain. Warmer than freezing, but not by much.

He balanced on the river rocks, cursing the moss that made them slippery.

"All the way in, cowboy. I want to see you dip your head." Henri's voice was gleeful, if a tiny bit malicious.

"You're an evil little bastard, you know that?" Thigh deep in the water, Logan cupped his balls and cock. "Evil!"

"Oh, come on. You look so hot like that."

Logan knew Henri was lying, but the flattery still sent pride spinning through him. Taking a huge breath, Logan let his legs collapse. Cold forced the wind from his lungs and the blood from his brain. The water had barely rushed over his head before Logan launched back to standing, zinging with endorphins. He might have levitated right out of the water, he waded so fast back to shore.

Still soaking, he grabbed Henri in a bear hug.

"Ah! What are you doing?" Henri struggled to get free—angry but laughing at the same time. "Let me go."

Reluctantly, Logan grabbed his towel. "I needed the body heat." He batted his eyes, playing innocent.

Henri socked Logan in the arm. “Jerk.”

“Takes one to know one.” Logan’s skin burned from the transition from cold to warm, like all the blood had rushed to the surface and was turning him flushed and sensitive. And horny. So fucking horny. All that shit with Soleil—it was in the past, washed away by a harsh baptism.

“Come on.” Logan grabbed Henri’s hand, tugging him over the ridge to the campground.

“Shit. You really do have a plan for a dare, don’t you?”

Logan snorted out a laugh. “You bet that sweet ass of yours I do.”

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Chapter Ten

“Are you sure about this?” Henri opened the wrapper and held the condom uncertainly to the tip of Logan’s cock. Much as he’d looked forward to showing Logan his spectacular blowjob skills, he hadn’t planned on doing it with a barrier. “I told you—”

“Of course I’m sure.” Logan grinned to his ears, quite clearly not feeling any of Henri’s trepidation. “I wouldn’t have dared you otherwise.” His cock pointed straight up, exposed and waiting for Henri to suck it.

Henri’s mouth watered. God, he loved sucking dick. It killed him that he’d have to do it while tasting latex. “It’s not my fault if you catch herpes,” he scolded, though Henri knew doing this was safe.

With a final shrug to ward off his nervousness, he rolled the condom down to Logan’s base.

“Aw, damn.” Logan watched him with heat in his eyes. “Go on.”

Henri studied the rubber-clad member. He never got performance anxiety about sex—at least not when it came to head—but he wanted to impress Logan. “I’ll do my best, but you know, you may not feel—”

“Less talkin’, more suckin’, Champ.” Logan wiped his wet hair with a towel, reminding Henri of exactly what he’d done to deserve this payback.

“Fine.” Henri gripped the base and closed his mouth around Logan’s cap. It tasted like dust and spermicide, and felt funny on his tongue. Too smooth and yet too much friction all at the same time.

Trying to create a decent lock of suction, Henri worked his lips lower. After a few earnest bobs of his head, he broke away to ask, “Feel anything?” While he waited for the answer, he rubbed Logan through the condom.

“Hell yeah, I do. You’re real good at this.” Logan ran a hand through Henri’s hair. The expression on his face was sweet and awed, like he’d never imagined anything as amazing as what Henri was doing to him. “C’mon. More.”

His chest tight from Logan's encouragement, Henri dove back on. He sucked harder and worked Logan in long strokes, feeling Logan's response through the condom. Logan's cock hardened and swelled, pushing to the back of Henri's throat when Logan bucked.

"I can't believe this is really working." Henri licked around the cap, unsure whether Logan could feel that level of detail but still thrilled with his new discovery. Yeah, it wasn't as great as doing it the normal way, but Henri was psyched he could still get Logan off with his mouth.

"You've never gotten head like this?" Logan stroked his cheek.

Henri shuffled between Logan's legs so he could cup Logan's balls with his free hand. "Nope." With a rueful frown, he added, "Not like I've gotten blown at all in the last year." Henri dipped his fingers along Logan's taint, wondering whether Logan wanted him to try out more tricks.

Logan reached down and stilled his hand. "What?" His forehead knit in concern. "Really?"

Henri kissed Logan's tip, trying not to get dragged into yet another conversation about his asshole ex. "Preston didn't really like giving head." Most of the time Henri hadn't even thought about it. But every once in a while... Well, there were times when it might have been nice if Preston had made the effort. Or if just once Preston had offered Henri the chance to top.

Logan propped himself up on his elbows so he could see Henri's face better. "Not at all?"

"It wasn't that big of a deal." Henri chuckled, acting like he didn't care. Somehow Logan's concern made Henri feel ten times worse. He already knew Preston was a douche bag and that Logan was a miles-better person. Henri didn't need Logan aware of all the ways Henri'd let Preston fuck him over. "I like giving better than getting anyway."

"Oh." Logan bit his lower lip, letting his head fall to the pillow.

Trying to regain the mood, Henri sucked Logan down far enough so his lips met his fist. After a few moans on Logan's part and the feel of his muscular thighs tensing, Henri was right back in the zone. He floated on power, his excitement rising in time with Logan's. It wasn't a sexual thrill so much as an emotional one. Henri could have jerked off, he was turned on enough, but he wanted to give it all to Logan, feeding that tension and strain back until Logan was riding so close to the edge he'd think he would never come down.

Logan hitched a leg up, hinting that Henri should tickle his asshole. Henri messed with the lube, circling and probing, until Logan's dick was stiff enough to tremble, and Henri felt the length filling with come.

"Shit, you're really gonna go this way." Henri broke away to gasp a few breaths. He went at Logan with gusto, tugging his balls and rubbing his shaft. How he managed to suck on a condom so hard without ever scraping a tooth was a matter of personal pride.

"Fuck, darlin'. Yeah... Shit... So good." Logan cupped the back of Henri's head, leading him just a little. When he came, his body lit up like the Fourth of July.

Henri kept his mouth right there the whole time, a hot, tight place for Logan to thrust the last shots of his load. None of it got in Henri's mouth, of course, but Henri imagined swallowing him down.

"Ah." Henri drew off, sputtering but laughing at the same time. Without the thrill of the buildup, the fake rubber taste broke through his haze. "I'll take spunk over latex any day." He grinned, wiping at his tongue with the back of his hand.

Logan growled. "Oh my God, so good."

Before Henri knew what was happening, Logan pulled him into a kiss. Not a dry one, either. Wet and sloppy, like Logan wanted to eat Henri alive.

Only for one second did Henri give in to it, let Logan's mouth wash away the plastic and the spermicide, felt the warm, wet glide of Logan's tongue against his.

Then, all at once, Henri realized what he was doing and pushed Logan away. "Yeah." He wiped his mouth. "That's enough." Henri reached for a T-shirt and dragged it over his head. *Dammit*. Logan didn't know Henri well enough to take these kinds of risks. Maybe Logan thought they were close—what, based on two days of knowing each other?—but Logan didn't know all the crap Henri had done, and all the losers he'd dated. If Logan did, he would have avoided Henri from the start.

"What's up?" Logan moved to sit cross-legged, his head tilted and his blue eyes wide.

"I should check my email." Henri reached for his backpack. He needed to get away before Logan tried to kiss him again. Worse, before Henri lay back and let him.

“Oh, c’mon. I didn’t mean to do that. Got carried away.” Logan rolled his shoulders, all casual and laying his accent on extra thick. For all the world, it seemed like Logan was putting on an act—pretending he didn’t know what he’d done wrong. “It’s no big deal.”

The tent was tiny with only a few spots of bare nylon floor showing through the bags, backpacks and sleeping pads. Henri needed to get out of there, away from his mistakes and especially away from this weird frat boy who’d taken the place of the man he’d been spending the afternoon with.

He pulled a pack of cigarettes from his backpack and with shaking fingers put one to his mouth. Crawling to the tent’s door, he eased open the flap. “I need a smoke.”

“Outside?” Logan blinked. “You’ll get soaked.” He took the pack out of Henri’s hands. “Wait until the rain lets up.”

Henri snatched the box back, holding it like he could suck the nicotine directly into his bloodstream. “It doesn’t matter if I get a little wet.”

Logan rolled his eyes. “Crap, you haven’t smoked all weekend, and *now* you need to?”

“It’s none of your business.” Henri unzipped the door and shoved his feet outside to get at his shoes. “I just need a walk.”

“I’m... I didn’t mean to.” Logan touched his back. His voice was quieter now, more nervous. Maybe his real voice, not that stupid swagger he’d put on before.

“God, Logan... I told you not to.” Henri sighed, pausing in the doorway. He couldn’t let Logan hurt himself just so they could make out. Logan would end up hating him, and Henri would hate himself. Anyway, Logan didn’t realize how difficult Henri was to get along with, how he was flighty, with the attention span of a gnat.

Maybe they’d be better off as a weekend fling. No one would get hurt that way. “I’ll be back in a bit.” Henri stood from the tent. He lit up the cigarette, and before Logan could argue, took off walking across the empty field.

After a few moments staring at the inside of the tent like he could read his mistakes in the mess of their clothes, Logan crawled outside to stretch his back. His side ached from the tackle earlier, but that was nothing

compared to the hollow feeling in his chest. How the fuck had he screwed up so bad?

He didn't know why he'd tried to play it off like nothing was wrong. Probably it was habit, a throwback to all the times he'd breezed over problems with Soleil. Funny, Soleil always seemed to buy it.

A huddle of guys on the ridge distracted Logan from his thoughts. They pointed and waved their arms around like they were arguing. Logan could barely make them out, but then one of the men broke away from the pack and sprinted in Logan's direction.

He ran a couple hundred yards before Logan recognized it was Buck—in a panic. Training kicked in, and Logan grabbed his jacket out of the tent and took off running.

“Logan.” Buck caught his breath as he neared. “You're a fireman, right?”

“Yeah.” There wasn't much he could do if there was a fire, though, without any gear.

“Well, those guys with the dog managed to get him stuck out in the middle of the river.”

Logan wouldn't have pegged Buck as a dog lover, but he could tell by the creases in Buck's brow that the guy was upset.

“Did anyone call emergency services?” Logan patted his pockets, annoyed to find that he'd left his phone in the tent.

“There's a tree knocked over between here and town.” Buck strode toward the river, leading the way. “And Pemberton's got too much on its plate with some power lines downed by the wind.”

“Aw, man.” Logan spotted the dog—the same golden retriever mix that had almost knocked him over during football—on a strip of sand and river rock that rose halfway across the widest section. Holding a yellow Frisbee in his jaw, the dog paced the miniscule beach, a testament to how his owners deserved a lecture on leash laws.

“It'd make more sense to wait until the guys from Whistler or Pemberton can come out with equipment.” Logan spoke to Buck loud enough that the scraggly and wet guys who must have been the dog's owners would hear. “It'd be safer.”

As if to prove Logan wrong, the pooch leapt into the water, Frisbee between his teeth, and started paddling toward shore.

“Come on, boy! Come on!” one of the hippies shouted.

Buck threw out his arm. “He’s exhausted, Fred. The dog can’t make it.” Fred, however, wasn’t paying Buck any attention. He scurried down to the bank.

“Stop that,” Logan called to the guy. When he didn’t heed, Logan sprinted to the riverbank and grabbed Fred’s buddy’s arm. “*Do not* get in the water.”

The guy looked mutinous, but he did what Logan told him. But Fred waded into the river.

It wasn’t deep, but it was moving way too fast to be safe. The dog paddled with all its might and was slowly getting swept downstream.

“Come on, boy. You’re almost there.” Fred whipped back his dreadlocks to call to the dog. He was up to his hips with his legs wide, trying to keep his footing.

“Jesus.” No way in hell was Logan going out after that guy. Fred’s eyes were red and his expression confused. It was pretty clear he was high.

“Help me find a branch,” Logan shouted to Buck. “Somethin’ big.” Logan looked around the shore, and then to the trees on the ridge. One of the branches was broken off partially, and Logan grabbed it and yanked. With a couple of kicks and a pull that threatened to tear his sore arm from its socket, Logan got it free.

“Shit!” In the river, Fred slipped, getting swept a few feet before managing to get upright. He turned toward shore with a panicked gleam in his eyes. “Fuck, I can’t feel my feet, man.”

Yeah, he was stoned. Maybe on something stronger than pot if he didn’t realize that standing in freezing water would numb his extremities.

“Grab this.” Logan reached the branch over the water. His arms shook at the strain, and he wished like hell he had a rescue pole, but luckily the stoner got hold of a handful of pine needles.

He dragged Logan a couple steps into the water, but then Buck was at Logan’s side, hands on the branch.

Buck wasn’t as big as Logan, but he was certainly strong, because the load on Logan’s arms lessened. The two of them hauled the guy in.

By some miracle, the druggie caught his dog’s leg at the last minute and pulled the howling animal in to shore.

Rain fell in a steady thrum, but over the noise of that, Henri heard shouts on the other side of the ridge. Head down and hands in his pockets, he strode up the hill to where a bike trail separated the campground from the water. A few dozen yards downstream, Logan, Buck and a couple other guys struggled with a dog in a river.

Henri barely had time to worry as Logan hauled the hippie guy and his dog to shore. Logan could have slipped or gotten pulled in. God, he could have died, or at least been injured. The last thing he would remember would have been Henri overreacting. As usual.

Water dripped off Henri's hood and into his eyes, and he wiped it away with the heel of his hand. He shouldn't have gotten so upset. It was like Preston always said, Henri liked to freak out for no reason.

Logan was young and inexperienced. He'd forgotten what he was doing. And as for the risk... Well, Logan was right. The chances of him contracting HSV2 from kissing Henri were really low. Logan did have medical training, after all. Maybe Henri should trust Logan knew what he was talking about.

Before Logan could spot him, Henri hurried back to their tent. He laid their pads side by side and, unzipping Logan's sleeping bag, stretched it across. His own bag he spread wide for a blanket.

He dug through Logan's backpack, looking for a flashlight or maybe a headlamp—something he could hang from the ceiling that would be marginally more romantic than making up under the glow of Logan's tablet screen.

Nope. Logan must have been as camping incompetent as Henri, because he didn't have any light source that Henri could locate.

Henri pulled out of the tent and back into the heavy rain. Tomas and Jesse would have something. He checked their Rubbermaid bin and struck gold. There was a small camping lamp, coated with grime. Probably an extra one Tomas had brought as a last resort.

He pressed the button. It lit but was dim through the coating of dust.

Oh well. It would be better than shining his cell phone at Logan's face to apologize.

“Sounds like it's getting bad out there.” Buck followed Logan into the bathrooms. He'd been dogging Logan's steps since they left the riverfront,

and though Logan was glad for his help with the rescue, he sort of wished he and Buck could go their separate ways.

Logan shoved up his sleeves and pushed his muddy arms under the faucet. Almost as cold as the river, the freezing water stung his cuts. “Man, I wish I had some quarters on me.”

In the mirror, he spotted Buck undressing. Buck stepped out of his pants and pulled off his shirt. Wearing only faded boxers, he stared at Logan. “I have some.”

Despite the chill, Logan’s neck heated. Buck couldn’t have thought Logan had been making a pass. They were cold and dirty, and Logan had made it clear as day he was with Henri. Logan turned back to the sinks, trying not to glimpse Buck naked as he washed the sweat off his face.

“I’ve only got enough money to last a few minutes.” Buck stepped up behind him, hands landing on Logan’s hips. “We’d have to share.”

Logan tensed, not knowing what the hell he was supposed to say in this kind of situation. Did men really do this? Get all pushy when they knew the other guy wasn’t interested? No wonder Soleil and her girlfriends complained when they went to clubs. “That’s okay.” Logan stepped to the side, escaping Buck’s roving hands. “I don’t need a shower.” With a couple quick moves, he worked his sleeves over his soggy wrists.

From behind his left shoulder, Buck stepped closer. He wrapped thick arms around Logan’s waist. “I just need the body warmth, okay?”

“Come on, man.” Logan tried to laugh it off. He gripped Buck’s wrists and unwound them from his belly. Much as Logan didn’t want to get physical with the guy, Buck was starting to piss him off. “Give it a—”

Rain pounded on the roof of the bathrooms, and that’s why Logan didn’t hear anything before a surprised sounding, “Oh,” came from the doorway.

He glanced over and saw Henri holding a camping lamp. Water dripped from the hood of his jacket, running onto his face.

“Oh, sorry.” Buck stepped away, disappearing into one of the shower stalls to start the water.

Logan should have pushed Buck as he left, or said something angry, but Logan couldn’t seem to move from the spot. “Hey.” He forced a chuckle past his dry lips. The smile he gave Henri made his cheeks ache. “You’ll never guess what happened. That guy with the dog—”

“Yeah. I saw.” Henri’s skin was pale, ghostly against the wet, dark strands of his hair.

“Oh.” His mood dropped. “Well, so you know that’s what I was doin’. When I wasn’t at the tent.”

“Yeah.” Henri wiped a hand across his nose and cheeks. His snuffle might have been from the cold, but Logan wondered if it was something else. “I know.”

“So you know I wasn’t...” Logan gestured toward the shower stalls, then at the sinks. He couldn’t bring himself to say “I wasn’t cheating” because it seemed crazy that Henri would even suspect it. “You know what I mean.”

Slowly, Henri shook his head. “No.” The way he shrugged was so sad, like he should have known better. “Listen, I’m going back to the tent.” He turned and went out into the pouring rain.

For a few long seconds, Logan rubbed a hand over his face, trying to get a grip on what had just happened when all he could see was a red wall of anger. “That was a dick-ass maneuver you pulled!” he shouted toward the shower stalls. Then, knowing the only way out of this was through it, he jogged after Henri.

The rain was coming down in blankets, but Logan was so wet he only felt the slap of it. “Nothin’ happened with Buck in there.” He slowed at Henri’s side, panting. “I was wearin’ clothes. I wasn’t kissing him or anything.”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake, Logan.” Henri stomped, feet splashing up puddles and head tucked against the storm. “Stop it with the country-bumpkin act.”

“What did you just say to me?” Logan said it low and quiet, giving Henri every chance in God’s green earth to hear the warning.

Henri stopped, hand on his hip and cheeks reddening with anger. He scowled up at Logan. “You heard what I said.”

Logan’s hand curled into a fist, and at that minute he really could have grabbed Henri by the scruff of his neck and thrown him across the damn field. “Fuck you.” He stormed off before he could say something he couldn’t take back.

“Fuck me?” Henri followed at his heels. “Please, like you didn’t know Buck’s been hitting on you all weekend.”

“So what if he has? I ain’t done nothin’ to lead him on.” Logan got up to the tent and threw open the flap. Fuck if he was going to get hypothermia

fighting with Henri over this.

Logan tossed off his jacket and boots in the space between the rain flap and the tent, and twisted to the very edge of the tent to strip off his soaking jeans.

Henri sat across from him, peeling off his outer jackets. “Oh, please, like he was rubbing his dick up against your ass and you didn’t even notice.”

Logan saw how their beds were arranged. Obviously Henri had gone out of the way to make the tent nice, but Logan couldn’t care at that moment. He was cold and angry and just wanted Henri to act like a normal, sane human being. “I don’t care what the hell your ex did to you, but I’m not him.” He pulled his sleeping bag around his shoulders, shivering.

“No.” Henri curled up on the opposite side of the tent. “No. You’re nothing like him at all.”

Logan had never gotten violent in his life, not unless he was stepping in to defend someone else, but he wanted to take Henri across his knee and strip his ass until he was back to being the sweet, soft guy Logan was falling for. “I’m done talkin’ about this.” He looked Henri dead in the eyes, telling him as steadily as he could not to push this any further. “Okay?”

“Right.” Henri’s laugh held a kind of anger that Logan had never heard before—something that made Logan hotter than fuck even as it frightened the crap out of him. “Because you were so very clear with Buck.”

“I don’t want Buck.” Logan didn’t remember moving, but he was suddenly halfway across the tent, crawling Henri’s way like a mountain lion.

“You got some way of showing it.” Henri didn’t move from his spot, just stared Logan down with a challenge in his gaze.

“Yeah? Should I have pushed him off me?” The only man Logan wanted to be pushing around was Henri. The fucked-up thing was he was starting to imagine Henri might like it. He cocked his head to the side, studying Henri’s reactions as he moved forward another few inches. “Should I have called him a bitch?”

Henri took in a breath deep enough to make his chest rise. “Yeah,” he whispered. “Yeah. You should have.”

His lips were so red, like he’d been cold but now the blood was rushing back, filling them with sweetness. Logan didn’t give a fuck what Henri thought, he was getting a taste of that mouth.

“I’ll remember that for next time.” Logan crossed the last couple inches and kissed Henri’s lips. They were soft, salty like the ocean. Despite Henri’s close shave, Logan could still feel the hint of his stubble. He could still feel the clash of teeth as Henri kissed him back.

Henri murmured, “It’s not my fucking fault if—” but Logan didn’t give him a chance to finish.

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Chapter Eleven

Logan came over him, brute strength and anger, and Henri had no defense. He wanted it, just like always. He'd thought that maybe with Logan it would be different, that things would be nice and simple and no one would get hurt. Henri shouldn't have been surprised he was wrong.

"Motherfucker," Logan muttered when their cocks brushed. He grabbed Henri's ass, all hard passion, and ground Henri's groin into his.

Some small voice in the back of Henri's head screamed *no*. He should warn Logan again, forced him to consider the risks. But the hungry part of him—the part that needed the shove and thrust and the angry words and maybe even the pain—took over, until Henri hooked his ankles over Logan's hips.

Henri told himself it was okay, because he didn't care about Logan anyway. A voice in his head told him he was lying.

Slowly, Logan drew his cock back, dragging along Henri's skin, until he changed direction to rub along Henri's taint. The damp tip probed, pressing tighter than was safe even if it hadn't been for the herpes.

Henri wasn't going to tell him to stop though. "You gonna fuck me?" He made his voice into a perfect imitation of Logan's Texas drawl and said, "Or are you chickenshit?"

He wanted to know, down in the very worst part of him, what Logan would do. Would he quietly excuse himself to get lube and a condom? Would he come back all blushes and apologies?

When Logan spit in his hand, Henri had his answer. Logan swiped it over his crown and added the rest to Henri's rim. His jaw was set and hard as he positioned himself.

Oh my fuck.

Self-preservation, something Henri hadn't known he had, kicked in, and he pulled away.

"Dude. What the fuck are you doing?" He tried to chuckle, though he'd lost some kind of stand-off, and fumbled in Logan's duffel bag for supplies.

“Don’t go all *Brokeback Mountain* on me.”

With scrambling hands, he swiped on some lube. The dark expression in Logan’s eyes said there was no way he would spare a moment for prep work.

“Here.” Henri held out the foil square.

Logan looked at it with confusion, as if he’d forgotten what he was doing. After a second that felt like it spanned an hour, he grabbed it out of Henri’s fingers and in a couple quick moves, rolled it on.

“Just take your time...”

Logan’s eyes were hard, their blue turned gray in the dark of the tent. “Don’t tell me what to do.”

Henri had thought he was too jaded to shiver. He was wrong.

“This feel chickenshit to you?” Logan pressed in a couple inches, fast enough that Henri’s voice rose in a scream that caught in his throat.

Logan attacked Henri’s lips, widening Henri’s mouth with his tongue and delving inside. His kisses were growls and angry curses, but his body was still, waiting for Henri to invite him farther inside.

Henri let his jaw and his legs fall open. His muscles relaxed, and he felt the sweet sting of give as Logan sank to the hilt.

“Oh God.” Henri pressed his eyelids tight. He flew on the sensation. It had been so fucking long. Not just the sex, but this feeling of being taken, of a man demanding Henri’s surrender, a man taking out everything on his body.

“Do it.” Henri still hurt, but the ache washed out the sense that there was something else he and Logan should have been doing—instead of using each other to work out their demons.

Logan pulled back, hissing through his teeth as if it were his ass being stretched. He grunted when he drove back inside.

Henri closed his eyes, letting Logan take him over. The sound of it filled the tent, a slapping as Logan pounded hard enough to push Henri up the sleeping pad so Henri’s head lolled on the hard ground. Logan’s skin was damp and his kisses rough. He mouthed his way down Henri’s jaw to his neck, never pausing the rhythm of his thrusts.

“Oh God.” There was no room to get a hand between them. Henri knew Logan was close, and his own orgasm hovered just out of reach, threatening to rise to the surface every time Logan did him at the right angle.

“Fuuuuuck.” Logan jerked uncontrollably, hips snapping so fast Henri couldn’t keep up. His face turned severe in that last long second.

Henri was glad he wasn’t coming at the same time, because the sight was beautiful and terrible, like watching fire consume wood. Logan’s eyes, when he opened them, were bright as the center of the flame.

Still panting, Logan reared off. At first, Henri thought Logan was going to storm out of the tent.

Instead, Logan crouched in the place between Henri’s legs, rolled a condom on him and took Henri in his mouth.

All Logan’s anger had washed away, fucked into Henri until Logan was nothing but a shell. He kissed and licked and hummed around Henri’s dick, knowing he’d never felt as much tenderness toward anyone as he did for Henri right then.

He pushed Henri’s dick all the way to the back of his throat, a hot itchy burn when Logan pressed a half-inch deeper.

“God, chéri.” Henri traced Logan’s jaw with delicate fingers. “You shouldn’t.”

Logan pulled off just long enough to say, “Fuck that.” He sucked on the cap, jerking hard with a spit-slick fist like he could drag Henri’s climax right out of him. Not giving Henri time to argue, Logan traced Henri’s rim with his fingertip, and then slowly pushed inside.

The muscles must have been tender because Henri keened, but when Logan finger-fucked him in time to his mouth, Henri’s insides clamped down hard.

Henri arched off his sleeping bag. “Oh God. Oh Go—”

Logan groaned around him. With Henri jerking and shouting, pulsing his orgasm between Logan’s lips, Logan wanted more. He needed to own this gorgeous creature, he only wished he knew how.

“God, you didn’t... Fuck... You shouldn’t have...” Henri looked down at him, studying Logan’s expression.

Logan wondered what he saw. Did he think Logan was an idiot who took stupid risks? Or did he like the bruise on Logan’s lips?

Self-consciously Logan licked off the spermicide flavor. His palm was damp from where come had escaped the bottom of the condom, so he reached for his wet T-shirt. “I knew what I was gettin’ myself into.”

“Yeah, I know.” Henri’s mouth formed a perfect bow around the word. His eyes were wide and nervous. Tentative, but not angry. “But you still shouldn’t have.”

“Why?” Logan blinked at him. Henri had to know what Logan was feeling, it must have been written all over his face. Logan wanted him, herpes or no. Even with all their messed-up baggage from their exes. He wanted Henri like crazy, because when he was with him, Logan felt like he could do anything.

“Because...” Henri blinked, his cheeks and chest still red from orgasm. He seemed to be scrambling for an excuse when the heat in his gaze said he was feeling the exact same thing as Logan. Whispering, he said, “We don’t know each other.”

“I know you’re funny, and obnoxious sometimes. That you suck at river raftin’, but you’re a natural on a slack line.” Logan rubbed Henri’s leg, needing to keep touching him so Henri couldn’t run away. “And I know you’re hot as hell when you come.” When Henri’s lip twitched up in a small smile and Logan knew Henri was done arguing, he rolled them into a spoon position. “So trust me.”

“But... You don’t...” Henri squirmed in his hold. He sighed like maybe this time he’d let Logan smooth it over. “I guess...” Here it came, the argument. Henri telling Logan what they could or couldn’t do and what Logan was allowed to feel.

Logan tensed, willing to fight all night if it would convince Henri they were good together.

“Can we find some quarters and throw our sleeping bags in the dryer? Because this is seriously gross.”

Without meaning to, Logan laughed. “Yeah. Probably a good idea.” Logan nuzzled Henri’s hair and landed a peck on his cheek. “Let’s go change some dollars into quarters.”

The campfire raged outside, less rowdy than the night before but still raucous enough Logan felt weird about the quiet between them. He watched the show streaming on his tablet, chewing his bottom lip as he worked up the nerve to ask Henri what would happen tomorrow.

Would Logan drop Henri off at Michael's? Would they trade phone numbers? Emails? It seemed too soon to ask, like Logan should try to play it casual, and yet Logan couldn't stop the words from tumbling out. "So... you still wanna go back to your friend's place when we go home? Or..."

That came out weird, like Logan was asking Henri to move in with him. But still, wasn't that what they'd been doing for a few nights already? Living in the same home? At least at Logan's place, Henri'd have his own room.

"I dunno." Henri kept his gaze on the screen perched a few feet away between their two camping pads. They hadn't fought since that afternoon, but they hadn't made out, either. Logan felt like they'd gone back to square one. "To be honest, I really don't want to stay there anymore." He glanced up at Logan, only a flicker of their gazes meeting, but it was enough for Logan to see hesitation. "It's just that me and Michael have been friends forever, but I've been there a couple weeks already. That's too long to crash, you know?"

Logan figured out his meaning all in a rush—Henri was putting distance between them because he needed Logan to be his friend too. The kind of buddy to lend him a place to sleep without any strings attached.

"Yeah. I can see that." Logan lowered the volume on their show. "Y'know, you're welcome to stay with me for a bit. Even if you don't want to move into the extra room." He didn't make eye contact, not wanting Henri to feel pressured. "I've only got the one bed, and I have three housemates, but if you want..."

"Can I think about it?" Henri had been leaning on his elbow to watch the tablet, but he rolled to his back. Logan wanted to scoot closer, to watch Henri's face as he stared at the ceiling.

Instead, Logan copied him, staring at the top of the tent and yawning as he heard the sounds of drums in the distance. "Yeah. Sure. You've got all day tomorrow to decide." Logan stretched his arms over his head, forcing his muscles looser. Nothing had to be nailed down that night.

"Thanks." Henri's voice was so quiet Logan might not have heard him if he wasn't listening so hard. "For being cool about it."

"No worries." The tent's fabric danced in time with the wind. "You want to keep watchin' this, or are you ready to go to sleep?"

“Sleep. I think.” Henri didn’t move to Logan’s side, just stayed staring at the ceiling.

“Okay.” Logan shut off his tablet and put it in his bag. By the time he lay down again, Henri had rolled to face away.

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Chapter Twelve

Border traffic inched forward, and though a dozen previous trips to Canada prevented Henri from ripping his hair out in frustration, he could tell Logan was close to cracking.

“I can’t believe this.” Logan rubbed the steering wheel as he craned his head to see past the semi in front of them. “What’s it been, three hours?”

Sighing, Henri pulled his phone out of his pocket and checked the time. “Yeah.” Ahead and to the right loomed the signs for Duty Free. When Henri had come to Canada with Preston, he’d hated how his ex had always insisted on stopping for cheap liquor and cologne. But after moving five miles an hour for so long, his ass was asleep. Henri needed a break. “Can we pull off up there?”

Logan frowned. “You have to pee? Because when we get that far, maybe we should go ahead and cross.”

“Oh, chéri.” He patted Logan’s arm. The guy was so innocent, Henri regretted having to burst his bubble. “It’s going to be at least another hour once we get that far. Duty Free is still a couple miles from the border.”

“Gahr.” Logan sobbed, half serious and half kidding. He stopped, yet again, behind the semi and rubbed his forehead. “This sucks so hard.”

With the rush of packing and getting on the road, Henri had been able to avoid discussion of where he’d be sleeping when he got back to Seattle, but he doubted he could put it off much longer. Maybe stopping would give him a little longer to think. “Yeah. Let’s take a break, wander around.”

He wanted to rub Logan’s hair where it was short and fine at the back of his neck, but Henri didn’t dare. Not until he made a decision. Stay at a hotel, wasting money he didn’t have? Or stay with Logan and risk falling into another relationship?

He knew Logan wanted the full living-together package. It had been all over Logan’s face the day before in that rainy tent. Logan wanted Henri with him. Like, for real. As a boyfriend. Henri loved being around Logan,

and it made him sad to think about them parting ways when they got home, but jumping in with another boyfriend? God, the idea was terrifying.

Logan nodded. “Yeah. Guess we may as well go in.”

It took another half an hour to reach the turn off. By the time Logan parked, his mouth was tense and his eyes exhausted. Henri wrapped an arm around Logan’s waist to give him something to lean against as they made their way up the steps to the shop.

They hadn’t touched since the day before, and Henri missed the feel of Logan’s body. He missed the closeness of their tent. The open parking lot felt like a vacuum, empty and pulling Henri and Logan apart.

Double glass doors opened into a wide space filled with liquor and assorted luxury items. Between the bright overhead lighting and the fake scent of a hundred perfume samples, Henri fell back a step, blinking at the sudden attack of civilization.

“Is there a restaurant around here?” Logan paused a few steps farther inside than Henri, but it was clear he found the place just as overwhelming. “Or a bar? Nineteen is legal in Canada, right?”

“Yeah, but unfortunately this is all there is. Maybe they figure drivers would get wasted if they could drink at this point in the traffic.”

Logan brushed against his side, sending a shiver of familiarity up Henri’s arms. “I hear that. I’d be all over a beer right about now.” His voice was low and kind, and Henri wanted to curl up in the feeling of being close to him. Maybe he needed it badly enough to take the risk of staying at Logan’s place.

He headed toward the candy, trying to shake himself out of the desire to climb Logan like a tree. Henri picked some wine gums off the shelf. When Logan came up next to him, Henri shimmied their sides together. Logan had been so cool, offering him a place to stay, hanging out with him with no pressure. Now that Henri was faced with the idea of leaving him... Henri wondered if he could hole up in Logan’s truck for a few days while he decided. Either that, or Henri could take the empty room in Logan’s house. But that would cause more problems than it would solve. No way was Henri committing to living with a pile of housemates.

“Are you okay?” Logan took the bag from Henri’s hands, looking at Henri in that way of his—chin tucked and eyes wide. “You worked up about somethin’?”

“No.” Henri made his way to the magazine aisle, where he could thumb through periodicals while he organized his thoughts. Would it really be so bad if he stayed with Logan temporarily? Sure, they could never break up if they never started dating, but Henri would always wonder if he should have given things with Logan a chance. Maybe the only thing holding him back was that Logan felt so easy, like falling into a comfortable bed. With his other boyfriends, Henri had always felt helpless and desperate, completely out of control of his emotions.

Michael’s words circled in his mind—that thing he’d said about women who’d chosen the wrong guys needing to change what they were attracted to. Much as Henri hated to admit it, maybe Michael had been right.

“I’m good.” Henri pulled a magazine off the rack. Shyly, he pushed it to Logan. “Who’s your favorite?” There was a boy band on the cover, and Henri was interested to see if Logan would choose the skinny fem member, or one of the other guys.

“Who’s yours?” Logan wore a sly smile when he asked. There was a hint of a tease there, as if maybe Logan knew Henri was warming up to the idea of them getting more serious.

“I don’t know.” Henri made a playful pass at Logan’s forearm. “I’ve never seen what everyone loves about this guy.” He pointed to the boy with curly hair smiling from the cover. “His nose is too wide.”

Logan laughed. “Anyone ever told you you’re picky?”

“Not lately, but…” Henri trailed off, because in the corner of his vision the door swung open and a familiar figure walked into the Duty Free shop.

Tall, but not as tall as Logan. Dark hair. Preston was the same as usual and somehow totally different. His jaw seemed to have shrunk, and his face was pinched. Had he always looked that pissed off?

A girl wandered in behind him, statuesque in heeled boots. She was just as coiffed as Preston, and—to Henri’s surprise—holding Preston’s hand.

“Shit.” Henri ducked behind a magazine rack, pulling Logan behind him. “Fuck.”

“What’s the matter?” Logan bent his knees slightly so he could speak quietly in Henri’s ear.

Henri lifted onto tiptoe, searching the store. “My ex is here.”

Preston must have been in the partially enclosed liquor section because Henri couldn’t see him.

“Where is he?”

As casually as he could, Henri wandered to the edge of the scarf aisle and peered around. “There.” He located Preston studying a wall of bourbon. “White dress shirt, a jacket...” Leave it to Preston to be dressed to the nines even at the border crossing.

“Pointy face? Dark hair?” Logan frowned.

Henri brushed the backs of their hands together. He didn’t dare lace their fingers at the Duty Free, but he wished they could hold hands because he knew what Logan was thinking, and Preston was nothing—absolutely nothing—compared to Logan. Preston was a superficial asshole who treated everyone around him like garbage. While Logan...

Sigh. Logan was nice to strangers. Even strangers who weren’t being nice back.

“Yeah. That’s him.” Henri bumped Logan’s arm, trying to reassure him that Logan was who he wanted. Not the jerk in three-hundred-dollar slacks. “But I have diverse tastes.”

Logan shrugged, but there was a ghost of a smile on his lips. “I should hope so.”

Preston spun away from the wall of alcohol, and his attention landed on Henri.

Henri’s muscles tensed so fast he might have bolted for the door. That could have worked if he and Logan made a speedy getaway. But with Henri’s luck, they’d get stuck in standstill traffic again.

Preston whispered in the girl’s ear and pointed her toward the chocolates. She smiled at him and landed a kiss on his mouth before flouncing away.

“Guess he’s headin’ over.” Logan pretended to look at some ties. His accent had thickened, but Henri didn’t know if it was from nerves or because he was angry.

Henri didn’t have time to analyze it.

“What are you doing here?” Preston’s grin was wide enough to be blinding. Or maybe he’d just bleached his teeth a little too long. His gaze lingered on Henri’s body like a thousand tiny hands groping uninvited.

Henri couldn’t remember why he’d ever thought Preston was sexy. Yeah, his clothes fit great, and he had good taste in wine, but anyone could learn that. Other than his house and his clothes, his fancy friends, he was an asshole. “And what the hell are you wearing?”

It had been so long since Henri had thought about his clothes that he honestly didn't know. Glancing down, he took in the hiking pants he'd borrowed from Jesse, and the gray T-shirt that was streaked with dirt and coffee. God only knew what his hair looked like. Henri hadn't seen himself since his shaving mirror that morning. "We're on our way home from camping."

"Really?" It was a question, but Preston said it more like a judgment. Sliding his jaw forward, he checked out Logan's ass. Not like Henri could blame him. Logan had bent at the waist to thumb through a hanger of novelty ties. "And who's this?"

Logan stood to full height. His clothes weren't in any better shape than Henri's, though the threadbare way his shirt pulled across his shoulders was pretty delicious.

"This is Logan." Henri wove their fingers together, figuring fuck it—what was the Duty Free security guard going to say about it? Gay marriage had been legal in Canada since 2005. "He's..." *My boyfriend* seemed a little premature since they'd only known each other three days and technically they hadn't agreed to anything. Henri settled for, "We met camping."

"Hey there." Nothing about Logan's easygoing personality remained in the way he thrust his hand out for Preston to shake.

Preston winced, as if Logan was crushing his knuckles. When it was over, he wiped his hand on his pant leg.

Curtly, Preston turned his attention on Henri. "Can I talk to you for a second? Outside, maybe?"

"Um..." Henri glanced at Logan, then across the store to Preston's female friend. "I guess." He got on his toes to kiss Logan on the cheek, wishing Preston would leave them alone so Henri could talk to Logan in private. "Is that okay with you?"

Logan glared at Preston like he wanted to rip his lungs out and feed them to him. "Fine." He palmed Henri's side in a protective grip, more physical than they'd been since the day before, but it still felt right. "But if you're not back in a minute, I'm comin' for you."

Henri smiled at him, his chest warm and soft. He wished he could say everything he was feeling, all it meant to him that Logan was willing to defend him. He tried to pour his gratitude, his happy feelings, even his growing horniness into his voice. "You do that, chéri."

Preston led the way down the steps to the parking lot. A thin strip of grass lined the sidewalk, with clumps of flowers struggling for life amidst the litter.

When they were partway around the building and out of sight of everyone except the line of cars rolling slowly out, Preston snatched Henri's hand. "Shit, I missed you."

"Ew." Henri pulled his hand away. He had no idea where this was coming from and no interest in finding out. "For God's sake, what is your deal?"

"Oh, come on." Preston grabbed his arm, tugging Henri around. "I know you've missed me too."

"No." In the fading light of late afternoon, Henri could count every line on Preston's face. He used to think Preston was distinguished, world-weary. But really, he was cold and hard, aging before his time. "I haven't."

"Liar." Preston leered, stepping closer. "You should come by sometime. When you get back to Seattle. I'm not even with Jayson anymore."

"I'm sure you'll find someone else soon." Henri took a few measured steps away, feeling distinctly uncomfortable in Preston's presence. "But that girl you're with...she knows you're gay, right?"

Preston had talked a few times about fucking around with girls, acting like maybe he got off on the challenge. Henri had never known whether to believe him, but at this moment he wouldn't have put anything past his ex. "And about the other thing...assuming you and her—"

"I didn't love Jayson," Preston blurted. "Not the way I loved you."

"Oh, please." Henri rolled his eyes, losing his patience. "You never loved me." Maybe he and Preston had dated a long time, but Preston had never been the way Logan was—attentive, kind. He'd never put Henri ahead of himself.

"I always loved you," Preston said through gritted teeth. "I may not have said it very often..."

Henri couldn't take any more. He strode back in the direction of the store. "You said it twice." He remembered precisely because he'd been waiting and waiting to hear those words. "In over a year, you told me you loved me a total of two times."

"I'm saying it now." Preston crowded Henri's steps. "We both like art, and clubs, and coffee." He caught Henri by the elbow. "And the rough stuff

every once in a while.”

Henri swallowed the bile that rose in the back of his throat. “Preston...” Henri took a deep breath, shoring up his nerve. “It’s over.”

At first, Preston blinked at him, head cocked to the side as if he couldn’t figure out what Henri was saying, but then slowly his expression twisted into something cruel. “Oh, because you’re dating that oaf?”

“Because I’m dating someone else.” Henri refused to talk about Logan with Preston, even to defend him. Logan was a nice, considerate guy who brought him coffee and encouraged him to try new things, and who—no matter what they said about nice guys—could be truly amazing in bed.

Unlike Preston, Logan had a heart open enough to fall in love. Maybe even a character strong enough to mean it when he finally said it out loud. “I like him. A lot.”

“Right.” Preston sneered. “And you think he can replace me?”

Henri stared up at Preston and all his pity drained away, leaving behind nothing but disgust. “I have absolutely no interest in replacing you.”

Preston’s hand flew out so fast Henri didn’t see it until it collided with his face.

The sting was blinding, but before Preston could pull back his hand again, Henri rushed to the double doors and dragged one open. Over his shoulder, he called to Preston, “Fuck off.”

The security guard got off his seat, towering as Henri passed. He glared when Preston followed. “Hey, you.” He pointed at Preston. “I saw that. You’d better not try it again.”

Henri rubbed the side of his face. The pain faded to a burning ache, and he was sure he’d have a red mark. They’d better get back on the road before Logan noticed. The last thing Henri needed was Logan freaking out and punching Preston. Logan would do it too. That was the kind of guy Logan was. He’d defend Henri even if they weren’t dating, even if they’d never hooked up.

Logan spotted him approaching and smiled. “You ready to leave, babe? Cuz I’m hella ready to go.” He leaned against a case full of jewelry, Texas accent cocked and loaded.

“Yeah.” Henri took his hand, making sure to keep his scalding cheek on the opposite side. “Let’s take off.”

“Did somethin’ happen?” Logan urged Henri around. His gaze landed on Henri’s face, on the cheek Henri knew was burning red. Slowly Logan’s expression shifted, his jaw squaring and his blue eyes darkening to gray. “I’m gonna kill that motherfucker.” He pushed Henri out of the way.

Henri scrambled in front of Logan, hands on his chest and feet planted on the ground. “No. Seriously.” He shoved the wall of muscle, trying to get Logan to focus and think clearly. “It’s not worth it.”

“The fuck it’s not.” Logan leaned forward like a bull readying to charge.

“Really.” Henri rubbed Logan’s forearm. People were staring, so Henri pulled him behind a chest-height display of watches. “But we’re outside the U.S., and Preston is exactly the kind of asshole to press charges if you punch him.”

Logan’s expression was a mix of anger and desperation. “You know I’d never do that to you.” He looked Henri over—his face, his arms, his shoulders—as if searching for more damage. “I’m so sorry about what happened in the tent. God, I came at you like—”

“No.” Henri gripped his forearm, making sure he had Logan’s attention. “I wanted that. Really. I would have let you know if I didn’t.”

“Yeah.” Like he couldn’t help himself, Logan pulled Henri to his side to press a kiss to his hair. “And you know I’d have stopped. If you’d said—”

“Logan.” Henri squeezed, almost pinching. He kept his focus steady on Logan’s wide, blue-eyed gaze. “I know you would have stopped if I asked. You’re the sweetest guy ever. That’s why I—” He swallowed the words, not wanting to say them so soon. He hadn’t known he’d felt so strongly until he almost said it out loud.

“Really?” The hardness on Logan’s face disappeared, replaced by a dimple that sank into his cheek when he smiled. “Me too.”

Henri would have grabbed him, kissed him, maybe molested him a little against the rows of Swatches, but as progressive as Canada was, he didn’t think the security guard would like people making out in the store. “Let’s get out of here, okay?”

“Yeah.” Logan wove their fingers together. “Let’s.”

They headed for the door, but along the way it was impossible to ignore Preston and his lady friend waiting in line.

“Hey, give me a second.” Logan left Henri standing by the exit and walked to Preston.

Henri might have told Logan to be careful, or argued he shouldn't go, but Henri hung back and trusted.

Logan stepped past Preston and said something to the girl at his side, pointing across the way at Henri.

Henri waved, not knowing what he was agreeing with.

Her mouth dropping open, she turned to Preston and swung her oversized purse at his shoulder.

Scared of the fallout from whatever Logan had told her, Henri hurried outside. By the time he reached the parking lot, Logan came up next to him and, like a Southern gentleman, opened the passenger side of his truck. Pausing in the crook of the door, Henri peered up into Logan's face. "Were you serious about my staying with you? It wouldn't be long, because I really need to get my own place. But maybe for a while?"

Logan scrubbed the back of his hair, blushing. "Course you can." When he scratched his way from his neck to his beard, Henri knew Logan wasn't done. "On one condition."

Henri pursed his lips. "What?"

"You let me kiss you whenever I want." Logan cupped Henri's cheek, his attention on Henri's mouth, but he didn't move any closer.

With the door at his back and Logan a solid wall in front of him, Henri had never felt more trapped, or more helpless, or more perfect. "It's a deal." He closed his eyes, parted his lips and let himself fall.

Chapter Thirteen

They stopped at Michael's apartment on the way back into town. Logan offered to go inside, but Henri told him to wait in the car. He only had a few things in Michael's studio—schoolbooks and a couple changes of clothes.

Michael buzzed him in right away, and Henri climbed the few flights of stairs at a jog. If there was one guy in the world just waiting for an opportunity to say *I told you so*, it was Henri's best friend. After a five-hour drive, turned to eight because of border traffic, Henri wanted nothing more than to get back to Logan's apartment, take a real shower with decent water pressure and fall asleep in an actual bed. Unfortunately, he needed his books for school tomorrow.

"Hey." Michael answered the door in clean clothes and with his hair wet from the shower. "You made it back." His expression was sheepish, as if when he wasn't around his camping posse, he'd lost some of his know-it-all swagger.

"Yeah." Henri hovered at the threshold, not sure what to say. Michael's apartment stretched out before him, only a studio of a few hundred square feet. The walls were scuffed and the furniture secondhand. Henri knew Michael had hated taking on a boarder. After all, he lived alone so he could be as much of a control freak as he wanted and not have to deal with any flack from roommates. "Traffic was a bitch, though."

"Sorry about that." Michael went deeper into his apartment, and Henri followed. "I bagged your stuff up." He gestured to a couple reusable grocery bags on the couch. "I mean, unless you want to leave anything here...just in case."

"No." Henri took in the sight of his belongings so neatly piled and organized. He wished the words would come easier, all the stuff he should say to his best friend. With all the crap he'd given Michael over the years, Henri should have realized the guy had only been trying to help. "Thanks for taking me in when shit hit the fan with Preston."

Michael worked the zipper of his sweatshirt up and down, a nervous habit that would have been annoying if Henri hadn't seen him do it a million times. "It's cool. And..." He shrugged, making a huffing sound in the back of his throat. "And I didn't mean to be an asshole on the trip, giving you such a hard time about your exes."

Henri swallowed, hoping that when he said what he was thinking it wouldn't give Michael a bargaining chip Henri could never live down. "Nah. You were right. Logan's a much better choice."

"So you're dating now?"

Henri could tell Michael wanted to ask a bunch more questions. Having known Michael so long, Henri could guess what those questions might be. It was a testament to how hard Michael was trying that he pinched his lips together and kept his mouth shut.

"Yeah." Henri smiled without meaning to. He couldn't think of Logan without getting a goofy grin on his face. "I mean, sorta. We're still figuring things out."

Michael nodded once. "Good for you."

With nothing else to say, Henri picked up his shopping bags. As he got to the door, he peered at Michael over his shoulder. "We make better friends than roommates, huh?"

"Yeah. You're right about that." Michael chuckled, mirth creasing his cheeks for the first time Henri had seen in a while. "But you know I care about you, yeah?"

Henri wanted to pull Michael into a hug, but he wasn't sure their relationship was back in a hugging place yet. "You too, chéri." He flashed his friend one last smile before switching both his shopping bags into one hand so he could open the door.

As he made his way down the stairs, a notification dinged on the cell phone in his pocket. Setting his bags down on the ground floor of the building, he flicked on his screen and followed the prompt to Facebook.

A message from his old manager Stacey sat in an innocuous bubble. Crossing his fingers for luck, he read it.

His heart dropped when he read that Stacey wasn't at the Buffalo Exchange anymore, but he persevered through the rest of the message anyway, learning that she'd taken a job at Nordstrom instead. Apparently she was doing well there since she was in their management program, and

she gave a link, encouraging Henri to send in a resume to Nordstrom's HR Department.

Huh. Nordstrom. It seemed like a long shot, since Nordy's was such a giant corporation. Henri was used to working at little mom-and-pop places where he could charm the owners. Stacey was cool, though. One of his favorite bosses ever. If she liked it...

Henri thumbed her a message telling her thanks and pushed out the doors into the bright spring sunshine. He'd have to completely revamp his resume from what he'd been planning to send his father, but on the upside, retail and customer service were the only type of experience he actually had. Listing his jobs at Buffalo Exchange and Speedy Coffee would be a lot more convincing than all the bullshit he'd cobbled together to make it seem like he wanted to be a paralegal.

Flowers blossomed on the walkway in front of Michael's building, smelling sweet as Henri passed, and straight ahead Logan sat in his truck waiting, a big grin on his face as Henri approached.

Maybe this future thing wouldn't be so bad. In fact, it might be pretty awesome after all.

"So this is it." Logan gestured uncertainly at the front of his house. Between the pink-painted shingles and the weeds flowering gleefully on the lawn, he expected Henri to demand to be driven somewhere else. There was still enough light to see the crack in the window on the second floor. Too bad, because in the winter it would have been long dark by now.

"Oh my God." His arm swinging dramatically, Henri dragged his suitcase up the walkway. "I'm so tired. Are you tired?" he asked Logan, though he said it more to himself. "I bet you're exhausted."

Logan was indeed dead on his feet, but nervousness battled with fatigue as he tested the lock on the front door. He'd hoped no one would be home and he'd need a key to get in, but unfortunately the handle twisted at his touch.

"Please tell me you guys have more than one bathroom." Henri dragged his suitcase over the threshold and into Logan's living room.

"Uh...can't tell you that, I'm afraid." Logan stepped inside, closing the door.

His roommate Sanders was on the couch, with his arm wrapped around the back and a beer balanced in his hand. Some zombie movie played on the TV across from him, but he paused it with the DVR remote and turned to gape at Logan and Henri. “Hey, man.” He stared at Henri expectantly, as if Henri’s presence, or his clothes, or something about him warranted explanation.

Logan guessed it did. “Hey. Sanders, this is Henri. We...” Shit, Logan really had not thought through introducing his housemates to his boyfriend.

His other housemate Chuck wandered out of the kitchen holding a spatula. His mouth hung wide open.

“We met campin’. And I...well, I told him he could stay a few nights.” The house rule was guests were supposed to stay three nights or less, but since Logan hadn’t had a single guest in his four months living there, he hoped his roommates would cut him some slack.

“Oh.” Sanders drank a large measure of his beer, looking to Chuck for assistance. “That’s...”

“Where’s he going to sleep?” Chuck crossed his arms. He was the oldest in the house. At forty, he always seemed to have some bone to pick with the younger housemates. “If he wants the spare room, he has to fill out an application like anyone else.”

“That won’t be necessary, chéri.” Henri stomped past Logan, swaying as he walked. He blew Chuck a kiss on his way into the kitchen. He called out to Logan, “Honey, you do have beer in here somewhere, right? Tell me you do.”

“Bottom shelf.” Logan’s housemate Anne was always cool about him borrowing her beer, so long as Logan paid her back.

Chuck and Sanders were still staring him down, the television screen paused mid-zombie attack. Logan shrugged defensively. “What?”

Sanders frowned. “You know, you could have told us.” He rolled up off the couch, downing the last of his beer. “I mean...I guess it’s none of our business or anything, but still.” He made his way past a spatula-wielding Chuck into the kitchen.

Logan hoped like hell Henri would bring him a beer too, because his mouth was too dry to talk.

“You should have put this on your application,” Chuck muttered. He turned to go into the kitchen right as Henri was coming out, and the pair

almost collided.

“Oops.” Henri ducked around Chuck, thankfully carrying two beers. He handed one to Logan. “Where’s your bedroom?” he said quietly enough that only Logan would be able to hear him.

“Oh, yeah.” Logan cleared his throat then forced some beer down. The fizzy bitterness loosened his tongue. “It’s through there.” He led Henri past the archway and pointed at his door. At the end of the hall, the bathroom was open, so Logan nodded in that direction. “Feel free to brush your teeth, take a shower. Whatever.”

Henri tugged at his sleeve, urging Logan to meet him face-to-face. When Logan manned up and met his gaze, Henri’s expression was set, and firmer than Logan had ever seen it. “I’m going to forgive you...” Henri held up a finger, “...this once. But you had better tell them you’re gay by the time you come to bed, or I promise I will never set foot in this house again.”

“You know you’re awesome.” Logan gripped Henri’s hand like he was falling and Henri was the only thing in the world he could hold on to. He’d never met someone as amazing as Henri in his life.

“Yes.” Henri smirked. “Yes, I am. But if you want to keep me, you’re going to go out there and come out to your roommates. Right now.”

Logan nodded and let go of Henri’s hand. Henri disappeared into Logan’s bedroom.

I’m gay. I’m gay. I can totally do this...

Chuck and Sanders were still in the kitchen, their heads together in front of the stove.

“Hey, guys.” Logan refused to let this drag out longer than needed, so he leaned against the doorjamb and said simply, “I guess you didn’t know I was gay.”

“Uh, no.” Sanders stepped forward, his posture aggressive, but Logan could tell from the set of his face that his annoyance was superficial. Sanders always got worked up about things at first, but he never stayed mad for long. “And I don’t care. You know I don’t. But I gotta say, man, we’ve been living together for four months. It seems like you should have said something.”

Logan shrugged, wishing he had a decent answer or some excuse. He wasn’t sure he was supposed to tell his roommates his sexuality. Then again, *not* having told them had felt like keeping a secret. “I was still

figuring things out when I moved in here. And then it never came up.” That last bit was bullshit. Logan could have brought it up any time, but he’d been too scared of what his roommates would think.

“Well, whatever.” Already, Sanders slumped, his outrage falling as flat as a tire with a leak. “I guess it’s no big deal.” He wandered to the living room where he flopped back onto the couch and hit play on his zombies.

Growls and snarls and the occasional gunshot filled the apartment. Chuck had gone back to cooking some kind of stir-fry, but his jaw was set in a hard line.

“You have a problem?” Logan figured he might as well ask, since he was bound to hear about it later.

“Nope.” Chuck’s frown told a different story, but Logan didn’t want to get into an argument with the guy. He and Chuck butted heads all the time, but since their work schedules were so different, they almost never saw each other.

“Well, good.” Logan grabbed two more beers out of the fridge, reminding himself to leave a note and a few bucks for Anne. Doing his best to ignore the waves of aggression pouring off Chuck, he made his way into the bedroom.

The door hung slightly ajar, and down the hall Logan heard the shower. For a second, he considered going into the bathroom and getting behind Henri in their rickety claw-foot tub. But Logan’s roommates had dealt with enough that night without listening to Logan and Henri bathing.

As Logan worked on getting his dirty clothes in his laundry basket, he took his phone out of his back pocket and stared at the flat black screen.

If his roommates had felt betrayed finding out Logan was gay, what must Soleil have gone through? He’d said he was sorry, but with all the angry words they’d thrown around, Logan wasn’t sure he’d ever really meant it, or that Soleil had ever truly heard.

Soleil was probably out doing something, but he typed in her number anyway.

She picked up on the fourth ring. “Logan?”

“Yeah. Hi. How are you?”

There was no answer for a second or two, but then Soleil said, “Fine.” Her tone made it obvious she thought something was up. “How are you?”

“Okay. I just got back from campin’.”

“Good for you.” She sounded happier than the last time they had talked. “This guy Amir from work took me on a wine tour down in Yakima yesterday. It was fun.” Maybe she was bragging, but that was fine. She deserved to rub his nose in how many other options she had for dates.

In the empty space that followed, Logan mouthed words that didn’t come out. Finally, he cleared his throat. “I called to say I’m sorry. For everything. I knew I was gay for a long time before you found out, and I…” He dropped onto his bed, rubbing his chin like he could force out the right words. “I was an asshole. It was wrong of me to do that to you.”

“I know.” Soleil sighed. Her words, when she spoke, were rushed. “And I know you didn’t do it on purpose. Truth is, I bet there were plenty of signs. Maybe I ignored them because I didn’t want to see.”

Logan’s ear heated against the phone case, fueled by his guilt. “No. I mean, yeah. Probably… But it wasn’t your responsibility to figure me out. I should have manned up a long time ago.”

The phone’s static carried over the line, but in Soleil’s silence, Logan thought he heard a hitch of her breath. “Damn.” She chuckled, but it sounded wet. “Look at you gettin’ all grown up.”

Logan swallowed against the lump in his throat. “I’m tryin’.”

“You meet some strapping young man who’s whipping you into shape?” Soleil teased with her usual quick tongue.

Logan laughed, his voice as thick and damp as hers. No one could call Henri *strapping*, though he could imagine Henri wielding a whip. “You could say that.”

“That’s great.” He could hear her smile over the phone. “You treat him right, y’hear?”

“Yeah.” Logan glanced at the door, listening for the sound of the shower. From what he could tell, the water had been turned off.

“I gotta run.” Soleil might have been reading his mind, since she rescued him from an awkward end to the call. “Don’t be a stranger, okay?”

Logan nodded. His voice cracking, he said, “I miss you, you know that? You were my best friend.”

She snuffled something that might have been a tear. “I know.” As Logan was saying goodbye, the line went dead.

The door creaked as Henri opened it. He wore the same fleece sweatshirt he’d been wearing in the car. Maybe he hadn’t wanted Logan’s housemates

seeing him topless.

“Hey, chéri.” Henri dragged off his dirty clothes and tossed them on top of his suitcase in the corner. “Is that beer for me?” Henri grabbed one of the bottles Logan had left on the dresser and dropped onto Logan’s bed. Leaning against Logan’s pillows, feet up on Logan’s lap, Henri let out a long, contented sigh. “Oh my God, a real bed. And running water. I’m in heaven.”

Logan couldn’t help but smile as he set his phone on the nearest surface. “You’re really not mad at me for only coming out to my housemates tonight?”

Henri kicked his side lightly. “If I had more energy, I might be mad. You’re lucky I’m so tired.”

“Yep.” Logan cuddled next to him, spooning his boyfriend for the first time on his bed. “I’m a lucky man.”

Chapter Fourteen

Three weeks later...

Safe-sex posters on the slick pink walls of the University Health Center seemed redundant. Anyone who'd gotten as far as Henri and was sitting on a hard-backed chair waiting for the final verdict would have learned his lesson. *Promiscuity is bad*, said a repentant voice in his head, and though Henri wished he could come up with an excuse for why he'd gone back to Preston again and again, Henri knew his reasons. He'd loved the drama.

The worry and the fear and maybe sometimes the knowledge he was taking risks—it had been like crack. But the high that came with being stupid couldn't compare to what Henri felt when he thought about Logan waiting for him at home.

Henri loved the hell out of him. Loved him for being kind and good, and for how Logan had held his hand that morning and reminded Henri that even if Henri had contracted HSV, they'd stay together.

Logan had sat at the dining room table in Henri and Logan's new apartment, and with a smile as big as Texas, he'd joked, "This was why God invented antiviral medication."

God probably had better things to worry about than protecting flirty and way-too-trusting cock-hounds from unsightly sores and itching, but Henri had appreciated the sentiment.

"Henri Serre?" The same nurse who'd taken his blood the first time stood in the doorway that led back through the halls of the health center.

"Yeah." He got out of his seat before the nurse had a chance to let slip what he was there for. Not that she would. None of the students waiting their turn had any idea what he was in for, but Henri still hurried to follow the nurse back to her office before anyone could wonder.

"So, you're graduating tomorrow?" The nurse's red face and frown told Henri she was making small talk, not actually interested.

"Yeah." Henri should have been more excited about finishing college than he was to find out the results of his STI battery, but honestly, hours in a

polyester robe wasn't his idea of a fun Saturday morning.

"Know what you're doing after graduation?" She held the door open for him.

"Yeah." Henri shuffled in and held on to the back of the chair across from her desk. He'd meant to sit, but his belly flipped with nausea so he chose to stand. "Landed a job at Nordstrom."

The nurse nodded once as she went over to her desk. Sitting down, she tutted at the papers in front of her. "That's a good company."

Henri was going to launch across the table and throttle her if she didn't fess up with his results already. "So, er...my tests?"

The quick crease between her eyebrows sent a chill of terror through him sharp enough he gripped the back of the chair.

"Your IgG levels are still low enough to classify as negative to both HSV1 and HSV2."

He could have kissed her. Seriously grabbed her wide, middle-aged face and landed one right on her mouth—that was if he wasn't worried she might be carrying some kind of cooties.

With all the research Henri'd done online, he'd found it was a miracle he hadn't at the very least been exposed to HSV1. Hell, chlamydia, gonorrhea... Nowadays, people even got syphilis. All of it had seemed so theoretical before Henri realized it could happen to him.

"What about the other stuff?" University policy dictated they run a whole battery every time they checked for STIs. Henri guessed it made sense, but it also served to remind him of all the flavors of fucked up he could have gotten sleeping with dishonest men.

"All within negative ranges." The nurse smirked at him over the top of her reading glasses. "I hope you don't take this as permission to engage in unsafe sex."

"Yeah. Don't worry." Henri bet the nurse was contract-bound to read him the riot act about wearing condoms and asking about sexual histories, and maybe even limiting his number of partners. Henri didn't need it, though. As far as he was concerned, he was never sleeping with anyone but Logan ever again. "I've got a boyfriend now. A good one." Skin hot on his cheeks, he tried to hide his smile.

"You still need to be careful." The nurse's smile was sly, disbelieving and resigned all in one.

What did Henri expect? He was just a number to her. A kid who could either take the good news back to his steady boyfriend he loved, or shove the test results in his pocket as he logged on to Grindr.

“I will.” He took the papers she handed him.

With a resigned cock of her head, the nurse rattled out, “We encourage sexually active young people to repeat their tests every three months.”

Henri sent her his best cheeky grin. “Don’t worry, Sarah, I’ll be a good boy.”

He hadn’t made it out of the health department building before he’d gotten his phone out.

OMG, RESULTS CAME OUT NEGATIVE!!!!!!!

Henri set his text to all caps, and he did not give a flying fuck if that made him sound like he was shouting. He wanted to howl it to the sky, scream across the bright blue June day. With all the stupid shit Henri had done over the years, he’d escaped no worse for the wear.

Before he’d slipped his phone in his pocket, it buzzed in his hand. Henri’s grin as he read the message was wide enough to reach his ears.

AWESOME, BABY!!!

The last thing Henri would have imagined was dating a guy who sent all-caps texts. He bounced as he walked, thrilled that Logan was as excited as he was.

His phone buzzed a second time. *You coming home to ravish me?*

Henri smirked as he read it. He typed in an answer of *fuck yeah*, and hit send.

In the shower, Logan cleaned every bit of himself he could reach and some he couldn’t. He’d even considered manscaping his downstairs the way Henri liked to do, but in the end, Logan thought that would be too weird. He sat in nothing but a towel, pretending to watch TV, and waited for Henri to come through the door of their apartment.

The nap he’d gotten after his shift had been brief and full of tossing and turning, and Logan’s knee bounced like he could have sprinted out of the chair and run laps around the room. Somehow, before he knew the results, Logan had been able to keep his calm. Maybe he’d resigned himself to

being safe indefinitely. Herpes wasn't a big deal. They'd have worked around it.

But knowing there was no need for boundaries? Logan could have gone and scoured the city until he figured out which bus Henri was riding, and burst in to land a kiss on Henri's mouth.

Footsteps sounded on the wooden steps outside—Henri jogging down a level to their basement apartment. The floor might be sunken underground, but the windows overlooked a garden, and the way they were angled the place got great light.

Henri's grin flashed as he passed the window. By the time Henri opened the door, Logan was on his feet, leaping around the edge of the couch to grab Henri by the waist.

“Well, hello, sexy.” Henri smirked into their kiss. His hands worked up and down Logan's sides, tickling the ridge of the towel, the bulge underneath. Palming Logan's girth, he smiled. “Miss me?”

Logan attacked Henri's clothes, pulling his shirt over his head and throwing it on the nearest surface before working on Henri's pants. Damn Henri for wearing his tightest pair of jeans.

Yanking, tugging and eventually tossing Henri on their bed so Logan could get the bunched cuffs off Henri's ankles, Logan finally managed to get Henri to just his underwear. “Fuck yeah, I missed you.” Logan couldn't meet Henri's snickers and teases with jokes of his own. He'd been so fucking worried about Henri. Not about the herpes—the HSV virus was completely manageable and would never have broken them apart.

But Logan had worried about Henri's emotions, about him feeling guilty or stupid or embarrassed over something that wasn't his fault. After easing Henri's shorts down to his knees, Logan dropped the towel. Sometimes sex was hot with their clothes on, but not today.

This time he needed them both as naked as they could get.

Henri's cock was ruddy, pointing straight up, and glossy at the tip. Logan licked right under the cap, tasting for the first time a bit of the slickness.

“God.” Henri thrust up, smoothing the velvety head across Logan's lips. “Turn around so I can do you too.”

Logan could have spent all day just licking and teasing Henri to orgasm. Heck, he hadn't even gotten to Henri's balls, but Logan had never been able to resist Henri's requests. “Uh-huh.” He flipped around so they lay on their

sides in a 69 position, but when he went to take Henri's dick in his hand, Henri rolled on top of him, pretty dick poking at Logan's cheek and mouth closing over Logan's cock in one fast swallow.

"Ah, hell." All he could do was throw his head back and pant. Henri's tongue was like fire, stroking down to the root and back again to circle his cap and sip precome out of his slit. He'd felt those lips before, Henri's breath on his balls, but not like this. Not with nothing between them.

"Hey! What about me?" Henri teased his fingertips between Logan's ass cheeks to tickle his hole.

"Fuuuu..." If anything other than Henri's breath was on his dick, Logan might have shot right then. Luckily Henri had turned his attention to lapping Logan's balls, so Logan managed to unscramble his brains enough to give Henri a blowjob.

Flavor rushed through his taste buds, sizzling through his nerves. He grabbed Henri's ass and split his cheeks open. Gripping hard, he angled Henri's narrow hips, working Henri's cock deeper and deeper until Logan had to relax his throat for Henri's cap to fit in that tight sleeve.

Henri's whimper vibrated, tickling the insides of Logan's thighs.

Logan moaned back, feeling Henri all around him—the taste of his heat, the smell of his pheromones, the feel of his shaved-smooth skin. Even more than that, Logan groaned because of the bone-deep rightness of it. They were in their house, together in their shared life. He didn't care that it had only been a few weeks, Henri'd stolen his heart.

"This all you want?" Henri gasped out his words.

Logan shifted so he could get at Henri's ass. "Yeah." He swiped his tongue over Henri's tender, puckered skin. This had been totally off the menu before Henri's test, and Logan could have spent all day just licking and tasting Henri until they both spilled.

All his imaginings about a long, slow tease washed away when he felt the rush of come to his balls. Henri sucked Logan down into that warm throat, rubbing with a tight cuff of fingers on Logan's base. The groans Logan made were beyond human, beyond animal. Like a soul and body being ripped apart and pulled back together.

With a final spit-filled kiss, Logan pushed two fingers into Henri's ass.

Henri's moans rose in time with Logan's, and Henri slid his hands between Logan's legs to stroke his tense sack. When his fingertip eased

back farther, pressing past Logan's ring of muscle and into his body, Logan's desire ripped free. Logan finger-fucked like he'd get his whole hand inside Henri, swallowing and gasping around Henri's bare cock.

Maybe he was being too rough, but Logan knew Henri could take it, and that Henri would return every rough thrust if Logan asked.

The first spurt in Logan's throat set off a chain reaction where Logan's brain, dick and ass short-circuited, spasming dry at first until his seed ripped out of his balls, sizzling up his dick into Henri's sweet, waiting mouth.

Come dripping down his cheek, Logan screamed around Henri's dick. His orgasm coursed through him, making his skin thin and hypersensitive. Even when he dragged Henri around and fit him into the crook of his arms to cuddle, Logan made sure every last bit of them was touching.

"Oh God." Henri kissed him, his mouth full of flavor—bitter and salty and nothing like the fake tang of latex Logan had tasted for the past three weeks.

Logan sucked that taste right out of Henri's mouth until all that was left was Henri's breath and his lips and the soft way Henri was still moaning, as if maybe just their being together was enough to get him off.

"Yeah." Logan pressed his lips together because everything he'd been feeling since they met threatened to spill out. The *I love you* he'd been holding back since they'd moved into the studio, the *don't leave me* he'd felt when Henri had considered taking a job out of town.

In the end, the temptation was too much. Henri had always been honest with Logan. Logan owed him the same consideration. "You know..." Logan breathed in Henri's hair. He ran his hands over Henri's sweaty body. "I love you. I know it hasn't been that long, but—"

"Yeah?" Henri lifted his head. He smiled down at Logan, bright eyes mischievous. "I'd hope so, because I love you too."

"Huh." Logan couldn't hide the surprise in his voice. They were living together, spending all their free time together. He guessed it should have been obvious.

Logan rubbed his face across Henri's shoulder. They were a mess, covered in sweat and come and spit, but after all the time they'd spent being careful, Logan wanted to enjoy the feeling as long as he could. "So, what are we plannin' this week after you graduate?" Henri had until next Friday

before his new job started, and Logan didn't have to work until Wednesday morning.

"I don't know." Henri wrapped his legs around Logan's waist as if he was thinking of starting all over again, with a nice skin-on-skin rub.

They'd already decided to wait until Henri got the all clear on HIV to have anal again. Maybe it was because they'd turned safe sex into a fetish, but Logan loved that the next time he was inside Henri, they'd be close to enough to share skin.

"Have you ever been rock climbin'?" Logan snickered as Henri's expression shifted to nervous. "I heard there were some easy walls down by Little Si."

Henri took both their dicks in his hand. Neither of them had gone soft yet, and Logan doubted they would with how Henri was rubbing their damp cockheads close. "Outdoor stuff?" Henri pouted. "Haven't I earned a break from the wilderness?"

Logan kissed his way up Henri's neck, knowing he'd convince him eventually. "You know you'd kick my ass. Your balance is way better than mine."

Henri bent his forehead to Logan's shoulder, his breath slow and even. "That's true."

"Rain and Gray said they'd meet up with us, show us how to do it." Logan slithered down to get his mouth on Henri again. The skin of Henri's cap was fast turning into Logan's favorite flavor of lollipop.

"Fine," Henri said with a long-suffering sigh. He ruined the effect by bucking at Logan's mouth.

Logan smirked, getting his hands on Henri's hips to hold him down. "By the way, your mom called about graduation tomorrow. What time did you want her and your dad to come?"

Henri glared down at him. "Could we save talk of my mother for after you're done sucking my cock?"

"Fine, fine." Logan sent him a teasing wink and went back to his tongue bath. With a kiss on Henri's tip, he gave him a smile. "Anything you want."

About the Author

Retired party girl and '80s film enthusiast, Daisy Harris spends most of her time writing sexy romance and plotting the fall of Western civilization. Ms. Harris lives in Seattle, where she tortures her husband by making it rain. She enjoys watching bridges cause traffic, watching football games cause traffic and blithely wearing wool socks with sandals.

She has two little girls who've challenged Ms. Harris's feminist tendencies by insisting that makeup and high heels are appropriate for every occasion, including rock climbing and camping trips.

Daisy writes M/M romance about gods, zombies, firefighters and college boys. She's never missed an episode of *The Walking Dead*.

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He wanted a boyfriend. What he got was a hero.

From the Ashes

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Fire and Rain, Book 1

When an accident burns down Jesse's apartment, he's left broke and homeless, with a giant dog and a college schedule he can't afford to maintain. And no family who's willing to take him in.

Lucky for him, a sexy fireman offers him a place to stay. The drawback? The fireman's big Latino family lives next door, and they don't know their son is gay.

Tomas's parents made their way in America with hard work and by accepting help when it was offered, so he won't let Jesse drop out of school just so he can afford a place to live. Besides, Jesse's the perfect roommate—funny, sweet and breathtakingly cute. He climbs into Tomas's bed and tugs at his heart. Until Jesse starts pushing for more.

Their passion enflames their bodies but threatens to crush Tomas's family. Tomas is willing to fight for Jesse, but after losing everything, Jesse isn't sure he can bear to risk his one remaining possession—his heart.

Warning: Contains an angry older brother, judgmental best friends, a slobbering bull mastiff, and enough red-hot gay loving to make a porn star blush.

Enjoy the following excerpt for From the Ashes:

"Alright. Let's see this." Tomas climbed out of the truck and locked the door. When he saw Jesse, his jaw dropped.

Jesse wore nothing but a pair of old, battered bunker pants, held up on his slim frame by suspenders. They weren't Tomas's, so he must have found them at a surplus store.

He'd smeared black makeup over his body, face and even through his hair. He looked messy and sexy. So hot Tomas took three steps to him and grabbed him around the waist.

"Fuck, Jess." He mouthed Jesse's shoulder, sucking hard on his neck. Tomas tasted makeup, but he didn't mind eating a little wax. He needed to

put a mark on Jesse before anyone else saw him looking so fine.

“You like?” Jesse rubbed closer.

The rigid material of Jesse’s pants contrasted with the soft, smooth skin on his chest. It was all Tomas could do not to lay him down in the parking lot. “Fuck yeah, I like. I may make you wear that around the house.”

Jesse laughed. “I should make you wear it.” Tomas kept groping him until Jesse gently pushed him away. “Stop kissing me, or we’ll never make it to meet the guys.”

Tomas put his forehead to Jesse’s shoulder and breathed in his scent. Jesse must have just put on deodorant because Tomas caught a whiff of it from the splay of hair poking from under his arm. He never would have thought deodorant was hot, but on Jesse it smelled like heaven.

“Fine. We’ll go to the party.” Tomas took Jesse’s hand as he started walking into the crowded streets. Even with guys everywhere, Tomas noticed him and Jesse getting some interested looks.

Jesse giggled. “You told me you weren’t going to wear a costume.”

“I’m not.” Tomas lifted an eyebrow.

“Mesh?” Jesse plucked at the front of Tomas’s shirt, right near his nipple. “I can honestly say I never would have expected to see you wearing a mesh shirt. A chain, okay. But mesh?”

Tomas reached down and swatted Jesse’s butt.

“I like it.” Jesse leaned away enough to roll his gaze over Tomas’s outfit. “It’s a little *Jersey Shore*, but you look sexy.”

“You saying, ‘You can take the boy out of the suburbs, but you can’t take the suburbs out of the boy?’” They stopped at an intersection, and Tomas wrapped his arm around Jesse’s waist. He leaned in to kiss him.

“Hey.” Jesse blushed on his cheeks and across the top of his chest.

“Watch it with the public displays of affection. What if one of your buddies is around?”

Tomas frowned. “That doesn’t matter.” He shoved his hands in his pockets, more out of habit than anything. “I told Rick about us.”

“When?” The light turned to walk. Everyone around them poured into the intersection, but Jesse stood there, a rock in the river, looking at Tomas with concerned eyes. “You didn’t have to do that for me.”

“I didn’t.” Tomas touched Jesse’s arm, urging him to cross while they still had the light. When they were walking side by side, he slipped his hand

down Jesse's arm and wove their fingers together. It felt different than it had before—more meaningful.

“He was running his mouth off. And he would have found out eventually.”

“Oh. Well...” Jesse bit his lip. Maybe he was holding back an *I'm glad*, or *Good for you*, or something else about how Tomas had done the right thing. Tomas was glad when Jesse kept those thoughts, if he had them, to himself.

Jesse kissed Tomas on the cheek. He didn't say anything else, just swung their arms, enjoying the Halloween crowd.

“You sure we can get in?” Tomas stopped in front of the club. There were at least another dozen guys outside, talking or waiting for friends.

“Yeah. We have tickets.” Jesse flashed them at the bored-looking drag queen sitting on a stool by the door.

“ID?” She cocked a drawn-on eyebrow at Jesse.

He handed her his card, and Tomas did the same.

“Go on.” She jerked a thumb at the door.

Jesse gave Tomas a big, bright smile and led him through the doorway.

That smile slayed him, and Tomas forgot all about Michael and the crap at Haunted Trails. Jesse was cute and adorable and sexy as all fuck. They were going to have an awesome night.

Not needing the coat check, they pushed through to the main area of the club. The floors thudded with bass. Red, green and purple lights beamed down from the ceiling. Mirrors coating the walls reflected hundreds of guys flashing skin.

The atmosphere sank under Tomas's skin until he was high on just being there. His pulse picked up, and excitement flooded his brain and his dick. Pulling Jesse closer, he kissed him like he would fuck him right in front of everyone. There, at a club where everyone was drinking and grinding and screaming their heads off, Tomas couldn't see any reason to pretend they weren't crazy about each other.

“Want a drink?” he shouted into Jesse's shoulder.

“Yeah.” Jesse palmed Tomas's pecs through his shirt. “God, it would be so hot if you had your nipples pierced.”

“Hm?” Tomas puffed up his chest, giving Jesse more to hold on to. He loved the way Jesse bit his lip. “I'll take that under advisement.” Tomas

tweaked Jesse's bare, pink nipple, imagining it speared through with a flat steel bar. "Maybe we could get it done together."

"Fuck, I love you." Jesse made a sound like a whimpering puppy and pressed their lips together in a messy kiss.

Tomas grabbed his back, trying to show him with his arms and his tongue that he loved him too. He could tell by Jesse's split second of tension that Jesse hadn't meant to say it out loud.

He'd meant *I love you* the way he'd say, *I love this movie*, or *I love it when you make me come*. Not in the bone-deep way Tomas felt.

"Let's get that drink." Tomas half dragged, half urged Jesse toward the bar. He shuffled them forward, pressing kisses into Jesse's neck and rubbing his dick against Jesse's ass. Again and again, he replayed what Jesse had said. Jesse loved him, at least enough to say it accidentally.

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There's more than one way to guard a body.

Burden

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In the year since his car flew off a cliff, Detective Brennan McGuire has struggled to relearn the simplest tasks—like speaking without a stutter—and even more with trying to fill the gaping holes in his memory.

But when his daily visit to a local coffee shop turns into a melee of flying bullets, Brennan's instincts take control.

So much for Keegan Monroe's first day off after a long undercover assignment. One minute he's relaxing over coffee, the next his cheek is kissing concrete. Question is, is the gorgeous man on top of him his savior, or the one who took a potshot at his head?

As Keegan shepherds the too-quiet, too-skinny Brennan through the investigation, attraction flares into nights of white-hot passion. But with each scorching encounter, more and more of Brennan's memories shake loose...and it becomes clear someone doesn't want him putting those pieces together.

With Keegan's oath to protect and serve putting him squarely in the crosshairs of a murderer, now the question is, who is protecting whom?

Warning: This book contains a good amount of stuttering, forgetting, remembering, danger, hot man love (cop style), and hordes of cuddly kittens.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Burden:

Brennan's heart raced. Things would have been much simpler if Keegan had stayed in the car. Then the other man wouldn't see how simply Brennan lived. Or worse, feel sorry for him. The pity sucked more than anything.

He climbed the stairs at the side of the two-story garage to his apartment and sensed Keegan behind him every step. What would the undercover cop think of his sparse place? Would it make Brennan seem even more the loser?

Keegan's hand covered Brennan's when he tried to unlock the door.
"Let me."

Brennan searched Keegan's face. "Why?"

"Just humor me. Please?" There was a seriousness in Keegan's features, something that told Brennan Keegan was in cop mode. He wasn't sure why. They hadn't been followed home, and surely there was no way in hell anyone could know who he was.

"Whatever."

Keegan smiled, and Brennan came damn close to leaning in and kissing one of the hot dimples that appeared on Keegan's cheeks.

He backed off to avoid making more of a fool of himself than he already had throughout the day. Jesus, he was losing what was left of his warped mind. Kissing Keegan would likely end in a black eye and a trip end over end down the stairs behind him.

"After all that's happened today, I just want to make sure." Keegan pushed the door open and disappeared inside the dark confines before Brennan could say another word.

Which sort of made Brennan feel, once again, stupid. In his past life he knew for a fact there'd be no way he would have stood outside while someone else searched his apartment. Yet another reason for him to hate the fucking accident that had ruined the very fiber of his being.

"Hey. Hey! Get off, you little rat. Shit." A loud crash followed Keegan's curses, along with a chorus of meows.

Brennan chuckled. Oops. He'd forgotten to warn macho man in cop mode about his pet project.

"Oooowww. Get 'em off me, Brennan."

Brennan stuck his head in the door. Across the space of the living room, Keegan danced through the kitchen, his gun raised to the ceiling, an all-brown kitten attached to his jeans-covered leg, the cream-colored one attacking the shoelaces of the opposite foot, and the other two, both brown and white, pawing at him as he tried not to step on them.

"Is it s-safe for me to come in?"

"Quit laughing, and get your sorry ass over here." Keegan slammed into the table with his hip as he kicked gently to dislodge the shoelace eater. Another one immediately took its place with an eager leap.

"Damn it. What the fuck are these things?"

Brennan laughed out loud and corralled the nearest two. He scooped them up and put them back in the cardboard box they had somehow

managed to dump over. Time to get something sturdier, he guessed.

“Jesus Christ, I’m bleeding to death here. It’s cutting my damn leg off.”

“Don’t be such a pussy.” Brennan pried the ankle biter from Keegan’s pant leg and pulled at the one eating the shoelace, untying the lace as he lifted the tan-and-white fur ball.

“That’s the second time you’ve called me that.”

Brennan dropped the two in the box with their siblings and stood, bumping into Keegan, who’d stepped up directly behind him.

“Maybe I ought to show you just how un-pussy-like I can be.” With a hand on Brennan’s upper arm, Keegan spun him around and plastered him against the wall.

Before he could take a breath, Keegan’s lips were on his, his tongue pushing in to tangle with Brennan’s tongue. The brief second of shock disintegrated into complete acceptance. Brennan put his hands on Keegan’s waist and held him loosely, afraid Keegan would realize what he’d done and break off. The man tasted so good. Brennan’s mind wandered. He hadn’t remembered Keegan eating a mint.

What did it matter? The man kissed like nobody’s business, and how the hell long had it been since Brennan had been kissed? He angled his head for better access and trailed his fingers up Keegan’s spine. Keegan cupped the back of Brennan’s head to keep him still while he plundered Brennan’s mouth.

Many, many heartbeats passed with only the ragged sound of their breaths and moans and the whining mewls of his little shitheads filling the apartment. Keegan slowly retreated, resting his forehead on Brennan’s. His eyes closed, he swallowed audibly, and Brennan saw the regret written on Keegan’s face.

“I’m s-sorry,” Brennan muttered, trying to squirm his way from between Keegan’s heated body and the cool wall.

“Just stand still, will you?” Keegan held him in place, his teeth ground together.

It was only then Brennan noticed the hard bulge against his. He’d been so caught up in the kiss he hadn’t even felt Keegan’s obvious arousal. Or the fact that the cop had put his gun back in its holster.

“I swear to God if you don’t stop moving, this is going to go way beyond a kiss, Bren.”

“Sorry.”

Keegan groaned and nuzzled Brennan’s throat. “No. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that.”

“I’m not complaining.”

“I know you’re not, that’s why it’s going to be very hard for me to move away.” Keegan stroked the back of Brennan’s neck. “I didn’t mean for that to happen. Not saying I’m sorry it did, but...”

“I get it.” Brennan sighed and pushed Keegan away. He would never again stack up to someone of Keegan’s caliber.

Keegan let him go and wiped a hand down his face. “No. You don’t. Jesus. You’re part of an investigation, Bren, a witness. I shouldn’t have touched you.”

Brennan shrugged and went about dishing up the kitties’ food from a sack in the cupboard. He stuck the bowl in the corner of the box where he was immediately attacked by the hungry felines. Several scratches marred his forearm and hand for his effort.

“Look at me, Brennan.”

Brennan sucked in a breath and did as Keegan asked, afraid to see the rejection he knew he’d find.

“Man, I was right.”

“About what?” Brennan narrowed his eyes. Rejection was the furthest thing he found in Keegan’s gaze. Lust, want, need...those were more apt words.

“You do need a keeper.” Keegan was staring at Brennan’s arm and the tiny bits of blood pooling to the surface. “What in the shit are those things? Lions?”

Brennan snorted and wiped at the scratches with a napkin. “Michael’s idea of therapy. M-meet Bob, Bobby, Robert and Roberta. And I do not need a keeper, thank you.”

“Bob, Bobby, Robert and Roberta?” One of Keegan’s eyebrows rose high.

“I c-can’t remember names very well. They were easy.” He shrugged again and looked down at the shitheads devouring their food. He’d have to change the litter in the box too since they’d knocked it all over the place making their grand escape.

“Should be more like Cujo, King Kong, Godzilla and Jaws.”

“They’re not that bad.”

“My leg says differently.” Keegan glanced around the open kitchen and living area, his lips puffy from their kiss. “Anyway, the place is clean.”

“I could have told you that.”

“Are you up for more mug shots tomorrow? I can pick you up in the morning.”

Brennan shook his head.

“Why not? Someone tried to kill me today, Bren, or have you forgotten?” He waved his hand in the air. “There won’t be any more kissing if you don’t help me put this bastard away.”

Brennan’s gaze shot up to meet Keegan’s. “I m-meant I can’t come in the morning.”

Keegan cocked his head to the side. “Ever?”

“What?”

“Not coming in the morning. Personal problem, or have you not been with the right guy to do the job?”

Brennan’s eyes widened.

“Give me a chance, and I can make certain you come in the morning.”

“You don’t m-m...fuck around, do you?” Had Brennan ever met anyone so forward?

“No. Not when I’m with someone. And neither will you.”

“N-not what I meant.”

“I know, but it is what I meant. Afternoon then? I can swing by after lunch and pick you up. Be ready.”

Brennan didn’t have the chance to even collect his thoughts and respond before Keegan had gotten to the door and gone out, leaving Brennan standing dumbfounded in the kitchen being serenaded by the purring shitheads.

The weather outside is frightful, but the cabin is getting pretty hot.

Let it Snow

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Minnesota Christmas, Book 1

Stylist Frankie Blackburn never meant to go to Logan, Minnesota, but his malfunctioning GPS decided otherwise, and a record-breaking snowfall ensures he won't be heading back to Minneapolis anytime soon. Being rescued by three sexy lumberjacks is fine as a fantasy, but in reality the biggest of the bears is awfully cranky and seems ready to gobble Frankie right up.

Marcus Gardner wasn't always a lumberjack. Once a high-powered Minneapolis lawyer, he's burned out and back home in Logan to lick his wounds, not play with a sassy city twink who might as well have stepped directly out of his past.

As the north winds blow and guards come down, Frankie and Marcus find they have a lot more in common than they don't. Making a relationship last beyond a snowstorm could prove impossible when one man won't live in the country and the other won't return to the city. Yet the longer it snows, the deeper they fall in love, and all they want for Christmas is each other.

Warning: Contains power outages, excessive snowfall, and incredibly sexy bears.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Let it Snow:

As the first day of their being confined together wore on, Marcus began to feel like the fat kid at a pool party—and he had *been* the fat kid at a pool party, so he knew what he was talking about. Even when people tried to include him, the overtures felt awkward and obligatory. Part of him knew he should try to join their conversations on his own, but he couldn't seem to find a way in, which only served to make him feel more left out.

To make matters worse, Frankie kept looking at Marcus expectantly, though what he thought was going to happen, Marcus couldn't guess. He tried glancing back at him, waiting for a cue, but all that did was make Frankie blush and turn back to the others. It didn't make any sense.

When Paul finally got the cribbage board and cards out at three, Marcus decided he'd had enough. "I'm going out to split some more wood," he declared, and thankfully nobody pointed out the wall by the door was stacked to the ceiling with logs and the front porch had enough for the next day. They let him bundle up and go out into the blast of wind and ice, probably glad to be rid of him.

Goddamn it. He didn't know how he'd keep from going crazy if this lasted as many days as it looked like it might.

The snow was over a foot deep now, and he had to really trudge to get through it. It was way too windy to work outside, so Marcus took a few logs into the barn, propping them up on an old bench before swinging the axe down. He felt better after a few rounds, his confusion and loneliness seeping out of his body with each swing. It would be fine, he told himself. He was just hung up on Steve still, which he'd known, and Frankie was a walking reminder. It'd be frustrating for a while, but pretty soon he'd get used to it, and before he knew it Frankie would go back to Minneapolis and he'd never see him again.

It wasn't like he could really have a chance with Frankie anyway. Despite his enthusiasm over Marcus's current employment, guys like Frankie didn't want to date loggers who lived in the North Woods. There was no way, either, that Marcus was living anywhere else, not anymore. Not with his mom sick. He wasn't going back to the Cities, and he wasn't going to any other city. So at best he could have a fling with Frankie, which had never gone well for him. Best to keep jerking off on his own and working. He'd be fine.

Lonely, but fine.

He swung the axe down, and an image of Frankie smiling for Arthur and Paul flashed through his mind.

It would be fine. Fine, fine, fine.

The door to the shed slammed open and shut. Marcus turned.

Frankie was there.

He looked like a fashionable mummy, trussed up in his overalls and bright red ski coat and his balaclava, his angry blue eyes visible in the narrow slit above his nose. After coming all the way into the shed, he pulled off the head covering and tossed it on the ground in front of Marcus.

"What is *wrong with you?*" Frankie demanded.

Too surprised to reply, Marcus put down the axe and stared.

“I’m done with this. You hear me? *Done.*” Frankie didn’t come closer, standing just inside the doorway, shaking with cold or rage or both. “I’m not going to spend days and days like this, having you snipe at me and ignore me all day and then lie next to me at night like if you move too close to me you’ll get cooties or something. God, if you were homophobic, I’d get it, but obviously—” He stopped, as if something was dawning on him, and then his pretty features turned up into a sneer. “Shit. You’re one of *them*, aren’t you? Think effeminate guys are the reason *you* get so much hell? If I weren’t so swishy, maybe your life would be easier?”

“What the fuck? No.” Marcus shook his head. “What the hell are you talking about?”

This only seemed to fan Frankie’s fires of indignation. “What am I talking about? I’m talking about how you won’t say more than three words to me, how you won’t let me do anything to help in the house, but when you have to do something for me, you act like it’s the biggest imposition in the world. If you hate me, just come out and say it. Get it out of your system, because if you’re going to be like this, I’m stealing the Ski-Doo and staying with Patty in town.”

“The hell you’re leaving,” Marcus shot back.

“Why do you hate me?” Frankie demanded.

Fucking hell. “I don’t hate you.”

Frankie put his hands on his hips and glared.

Marcus glared back, doing him one better and taking several steps closer to Frankie. “I don’t hate you. You’re not an imposition. And you’re not stealing the Ski-Doo.”

“You won’t talk to me.” Frankie crossed his arms over his chest, his slick red coat whispering *shoosh* at the gesture. “You always growl at me.”

“I do not.”

“You do. You just *did* growl. You growl at me and you glare and you make me feel like shit.” His eyes developed a sheen, and he pulled off his gloves, angrily wiping at them. “If you make me cry, you asshole, I’m *running you over* with the Ski-Doo.”

Marcus deliberately tried to soften his countenance, despite the gesture making him feel so naked he wanted to throw up. “I’m sorry I made you feel like shit, Frankie.”

This, however, only made Frankie wilt. “Goddamn it, *stop.*”

Marcus threw up his hands. “I wasn’t being grumpy, dammit!”

Frankie wiped at his eyes again, twice on each side, and when he spoke, his voice was hurt and watery. “Why do you hate me? I keep trying, but it doesn’t matter what I do. Just tell me why, and I’ll leave you alone.”

Marcus wanted to hand Frankie the axe to hack at him with, because he figured that would be a lot less painful. “I don’t hate you. At all.”

In answer, Frankie glared and shoved roughly at Marcus. It budged him about a half an inch.

“I don’t hate you,” Marcus repeated. The hell he was telling Frankie about Steve. “I’m just a cranky old bastard. Ignore me, and I’ll go away.”

“You’re not that grumpy to Paul and Arthur,” Frankie insisted.

This was true. Marcus sighed. “I don’t hate you. I swear.” His shoulders slumped in defeat. “You remind me of someone else is all, someone who really does make me grumpy.” Not someone he hated, though, because even after everything he couldn’t make himself hate Steve. “It’s not fair to you, I know, but I can’t help it.”

Frankie folded his arms again, but not as tight as when he’d first arrived. “Oh.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know I came off that badly.”

“You came off horribly.” Those arms relaxed a little more, then tightened as Frankie tilted his head to the side. “So you don’t hate that I’m kind of swishy?”

There was no *kind of* about Frankie’s swishy. Marcus smiled. “Not at all.”

Frankie smiled, and goddamn if he wasn’t so fucking adorable Marcus wanted to pull him into his arms and kiss him senseless. *No*, he reminded himself, but that voice felt weak and far away right now. Frankie was smiling at him, truly smiling, and it felt good. He looked nothing like Stevie. He looked sweet and adorable and kissable as all hell. So cute and perfect Marcus wanted to eat him right up.

You’re not going to flirt with him, remember? Marcus reminded himself. *Right*, he agreed, and bent to give Frankie a kiss.

After the Rain

Daisy Harris

They're going to need a bigger tent.

Fire and Rain, Book 2

Henri's list of bad exes is as long as his arm, but nothing prepared him for his latest, heart-stomping breakup. He thought he couldn't feel more abandoned, until his ride for a group camping trip bails, leaving him stuck driving for hours with a guy who is *absolutely* not his type.

After breaking up with his girlfriend of five years, firefighter Logan is working up the nerve to explore his interest in men. He knows he's gay. He just hasn't had the guts to do anything about it...until now.

Henri's big-city attitude and tight jeans push every last one of Logan's buttons, and when he and Henri have to share a tent, Logan is thrilled. He should have realized Pacific Northwest weather would get wet—forcing them to strip naked.

Though the steam between them is thicker than coastal fog, Henri's not sure he can let himself fall for another man. Not even the guy who finally treats him right.

Warning: Contains bad ex-boyfriends, even worse weather, and more than your average amount of sex in a tent. May not be suitable for those with germ phobias, outdoor aversions or fear of damp shoes.

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