

A photograph of a man and a woman sleeping together on a couch. The man is in the foreground, wearing a grey t-shirt, with his head resting on the woman's shoulder. The woman is behind him, her face partially visible. The background is a textured, mottled grey. The text 'K-lee Klein' is written in a black, cursive font in the upper left, and 'Lazy Sundays' is written in the same font in the lower right.

K-lee Klein

Lazy  
Sundays

Scott is a self-proclaimed, self-accepted, obsessive-compulsive geek—and he's okay with that. At least until a one night stand with a gorgeous man who couldn't be any further from geekness if he tried, somehow turns into a regular thing.

Devon is rugged, masculine, long-haired and tattooed—a man's man. Scott falls hard and fast for him, and to his complete surprise, Devon seems to have feelings for Scott as well. It all seemed so simple.

But then there's the part where Devon never wants to go out, and their regular thing is confined to those days when Devon shows up in Scott's doorway. Scott desperately wants more, but is afraid that pushing will cost him what he already has ...

Lazy Sundays  
By K-Lee Klein

Published by K-Lee Klein

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*This story was written for the Love is Always Write event at the M/M Romance Group on GoodReads. It was written for Adriana, inspired by the picture and author letter she posted.*

*As well as being dedicated to Adriana, it's also for Megan who's always supportive and encouraging, and Sasha for her awesome comments and beta genius.*

# Lazy Sundays

K-lee Klein

Watching someone sleep had to rate very high on the stalker scale. It didn't matter if the bedroom belonged to the person doing the watching or that said person was not sneaking around or hiding while they were doing the deed. No, none of that was the issue at all for Scott Weston. It was more the fact he did it every single time Devon stayed over. Since that number was up in the high twenty-something range, stalking had to be involved.

It wasn't like he purposely woke up early to stare at the beautiful, tattooed man who had by some serious stroke of luck become his lover. He hadn't set out to see how cute it was when Devon's bottom lip puffed out just the tiniest bit when he snored or how he muttered and giggled—actually giggled—when he was dreaming. And Scott certainly hadn't wanted to giggle like a teenage girl himself when he saw how Devon reached out for him when he left the warmth of the bed, then snuggled Scott's pillow when he couldn't find the real thing.

No. Scott watched Devon because he couldn't for the life of him figure out why Devon kept coming back. Scott prided himself on having a rational, logistically-configured brain and there was nothing about Devon reappearing time and again that fit into any of his logically set-up hypotheses. The data that brought about the unexplainable outcome was overwhelming, but just did not compute in Scott's mind. Sure the sex was great and in that way they were very compatible, but in all other ways they didn't seem to have anything in common.

Devon Ducaïne was hot. Hell, even his name was hot and when he said it with that slight hint of a Southern accent it made Scott weak in the knees. And there, that right there—*weak in the knees*—was another clear example of how preposterous it was for Scott and Devon to even have a conversation let alone a relationship or whatever it was they were having. Scott was the kind of guy who actually used that

phrase like some old-fashioned granny in a rocking chair. Devon, on the other hand, was more likely to say "you rock my fucking world, dude."

Devon was what Scott would describe as a man's man, every holey jeans, tight t-shirts, nipples and ears pierced, motorcycle boots-wearing bit of him. He always had a hint of eau de motor oil mixed in with all the other delicious scents that poured off him, more than likely because he drove a motorcycle or was it rode one? Scott could never remember the correct term. He barely knew a motorcycle from a scooter, just another one of those illogical incompatibilities in their relationship.

When Devon had practically begged him to watch a football game on a couple of Sundays because his beloved Saints were facing an awesome match-up, it had added another thing they did not have in common to Scott's growing list. In the end Scott hadn't minded at all, content to rest his head on Devon's lap and read. He'd loved seeing another side to Devon's personality that matched the enthusiasm he usually saved for the bedroom, plus when Devon's Saints did win he was always horny as hell.

*But back to Devon's hotness.* Almost six feet—if Scott had to guess he'd say five foot, ten and three-quarter inches—of muscled, ropey not bulky, toned manly man. Add a bubble butt that could stop a truck, the sweetest crooked smile this side of the Mississippi, brown doe eyes batting long, dark lashes any woman would be jealous of, thick dark-brown waves of hair that touched his collar in the back, and a permanent five o'clock shadow, and you had the stunning man that was Devon Ducaine. The intriguing artwork that decorated his arms and part of his back was just icing on the proverbial perfect cake.

Then there was Scott. He was three inches—possibly three and three-quarters—shorter than Devon, but there wasn't a muscle to be had unless you counted the big, engorged one between his ears. He wasn't a hundred pound weakling and wouldn't take first or even second place in an ugly contest by any means, but he had none of the physical attributes that made Devon a walking bundle of sex. His blonde hair was the unattractive color of dishwasher, his blue eyes were closer to

the color of a cloudy ocean than a glimmering sea, and his nose was definitely more Romanesque than Devon's turned-up button.

Devon was so far out of his league he was in the wrong ballpark and that bugged the living crap out of Scott.

"You think too much, especially so early on a Sunday morning." Devon's soft eyes were still hazy from sleep, one side of his face sported a wrinkly line from the pillow, and his hair was more a mess than his usual casually-messed 'do. He still made Scott weak in the knees.

"I was just wondering if you wanted, you know, breakfast." *Phew, good answer, Scott. Not.*

Devon reached an arm from beneath the covers, snagging Scott's hand and tugging him oh-so-not-gracefully onto the bed. He landed with an oof on top of Devon.

"Good morning," Devon purred. Oh fuck yeah, Scott was sure he actually purred. "Happy Sunday."

Before he could answer, Scott's lips were taken in a sweet kiss, Devon's hand sliding into his hair and holding him close. He pulled away with a groan.

"Ug, morning breath, sorry."

Devon didn't release his hold. "Don't you know if we both have it, it cancels out? Besides, you taste damn good to me."

Ah, Devon was relentless in his charm and a weak-kneed Scott fell back into bed with his Adonis without a single question in his over-thinking mind.

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After being coerced back into bed with Devon—though it hadn't taken much coercion—Scott took a quick shower then shuffled into the kitchen to make coffee and put water on for Devon's herbal tea. It had surprised him at first, the big calloused hands wrapped around a cup of green or oolong tea, but now it was just another element of Devon Ducaine. He was a lesson in contradictions on so many levels, from the tea he drank to the way he liked to be dominated in bed. He was still



all Alpha male, but he liked to bottom as much as top and that had been both a surprising and welcome discovery.

Once he'd filled the kettle and set the coffee to brewing, Scott headed into the living room. Sunday mornings were always the best when Devon stayed over Saturday night. It was the one day of the week Scott let himself off the hook from all the boring chores he obsessively scheduled. Five pairs of underwear, five pairs of socks, a pair of jeans and three t-shirts not getting washed on their predestined Sunday would not mean the end of the world. At least that's what Scott told himself when he crossed the task off his weekly list. He'd just throw caution to the wind and wash them on Monday night. It wasn't like he didn't have extra anyhow, plus his dress shirts and suits had already been collected from the dry cleaners. He had two sets of those, so one set could be at the cleaners while the others were in use. It was the epitome of anal, but he'd been doing it that way for so long, it wasn't something he'd grow out of.

Scott had long given up trying to change the bits of OCD that had wiggled their way into his life since he was a child. He'd fought and tamed the urges and compulsions on a few separate occasions, but in the end he always lost the battle. He didn't have to turn lights off and on five times in a row or make sure he'd locked the door four times when he left the house, and he'd met people whose battle with obsessive compulsive disorder kept them from even leaving the house. So having to arrange certain things a certain way and making lists for absolutely everything wasn't so bad.

There were two other Sunday chores that always got left by the wayside when Devon stayed over: vacuuming and calling his parents. Most people might not consider a phone call to their relatives a chore, but they didn't know Scott's parents. He'd come out to them almost eight years before at the ripe old age of twenty-four, a late bloomer tired of the constant nattering and nagging about girlfriends and wives and grandchildren. But telling them outright that he preferred men to women and that they would never get the beloved daughter

or grandkids they harped about hadn't helped; they still continued to ask him the same damn questions.

He had considered bringing a man to Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner and had even been with a one or two who would have fit the bill perfectly, but it was more hassle than he'd been willing to endure. He'd always figured picking a man totally opposite the type he usually dated would be the ultimate fuck you. Something to feed his hopes they would finally accept the whole situation and move on—someone like Devon perhaps.

The full-on press of Devon's torso to Scott's back snapped the lid on the musings circling his brain. He quickly shoved the partially crossed-off list under the closest newspaper on the desk, giving himself permission to just enjoy Devon. He smelled like the outdoors, motor oil, and fresh cut grass—manly smells. Scott reminded himself to hide the cucumber melon body wash he loved and pick up some Old Spice soap for the next time Devon was over.

"Why do you always cross those off?" Devon fished the list out from beneath the pile, lips pressing against Scott neck as he spoke. "I don't mind helping. I have talents outside the bedroom too."

Scott snorted in amusement. "Now wouldn't that just be the perfect Sunday activity for the two of us—you helping me with my laundry."

"Maybe I'll just bring mine over and do it with yours."

Scott's breath caught in his throat. He opened and closed his mouth a few times, feeling like a fish gulping air. He tried not to let the panic in his head invade the rest of his body. *Normal. Just stay normal.* "You... you... you..." He struggled to stay upright, grabbing the edge of his desk and taking slow deep breaths.

"Whoa, you okay? Need to sit down? Scott, say something."

"Coffee," was all Scott managed, followed by an unmanly squeak when Devon pulled him in the direction of the kitchen. He knew better than to let Devon's off-the-cuff comment stick inside his head. The hoping and anticipating would give him an

ulcer faster than any other stress he could think of, not to mention the sudden burst of panic that tightened his chest. He needed to play it cool, but where Devon was concerned the coolness was getting harder and harder to fake.

"So what do ya do?"

Scott sighed, moving the steaming mug from his lips and letting his bottom rest back against the countertop. There it was—the question that always sent the temporary men in his life running for the hills. It had taken far longer than ever before to come up, more than likely because that sort of personal information hadn't been exchanged between him and Devon. It just added to the strangeness of their so-called relationship; was it even possible to feel such intimacy when so few personal details were revealed? Scott had no idea and he was more than a little terrified to find out. The wrong answer would surely break his heart no matter how hard he tried to believe it wouldn't.

He forced himself to relax further against the counter and looked Devon right in his puppy dog eyes. "What do you think would be the most boring job in the world?"

Devon didn't even hesitate with his answer, crooked smile giving way to a disgusted grimace. "Oh fuck. An accountant for sure. All those numbers to keep track of, gives me a headache just thinking about it. I swear my uncle went to an early grave because he was an—"

Scott tried to stifle a chuckle... unsuccessfully.

"...shit, you're an accountant, aren't you?"

"Thankfully, I'm not in my grave yet though."

The crooked grin returned—accompanied by two sweet dimples—sweeping a dusting of pure pleasure and happiness around Scott's heart. "I think you proved that this morning... and twice last night."

Scott reddened, heat rising from his neck to his cheeks. Devon's wide, mischievous grin made Scott want to drag him back to the bedroom to prove just how alive he really was. The man was simply amazing when he smiled or frowned or well, did anything at all. Goddammit, Scott had it bad.

Devon popped another grape into his mouth while he settled his hip against the countertop, eyes never leaving Scott's. "So you got plans for today?"

"Not in the slightest."

"Cool."

It was the same routine every Sunday and it usually comforted Scott, made his heart warm and his brain swirly. Perhaps it had been the mild panic attack or just the fact that Devon seemed so at home at Scott's place that made him take a chance and ask. He fought to keep the anxiety from peppering his voice while his nerves wiggled under his skin. "We could maybe go out for brunch, if you want?"

Devon shrugged, running a hand down his bare chest to rest on his belly. "I kinda filled up on grapes."

Scott sighed, letting his chin fall to his chest. There it was again, that nagging suspicious tingle that bounced around in his brain every time he asked Devon to go somewhere. He'd only broached the subject twice before, but never in such a direct way and maybe it was time to put all his cards on the table, despite the horrendous consequences that could arise.

"Devon, are you... um... are you..."

Devon cocked his head to the side, strong jaw paused in his grape fondling, one shining dimple appearing on the left side of his face. "Am I...? Hungry? Thirsty? Gay? Really a woman?"

Scott gnawed on his bottom lip, one hand moving to his hip. "A woman? I never considered that. You've got such a great set of..."

"Stalling," Devon said, stepping uncomfortably into Scott's personal space. He framed Scott's body between his arms, Scott's ass pressed hard into the countertop.

"Out!" he finally managed. "Are you out?"

Devon laughed, dipping his head so his forehead rested against Scott's. He didn't think it was that funny, but damn Devon could keep him caged in his arms all day if he really wanted to. "I'm out, believe me. But today I'd much rather stay in and do some number-crunching."

Scott swallowed thickly. "Num... number-crunching?"

"Yeah. Isn't that what accountants do? You know—count how many times I can make you come before lunchtime. How many times you can return the favor."

The words were barely out of Devon's mouth before his lips crushed Scott's, determined tongue poking at the crease of Scott's lips until it was welcomed inside. Scott was afraid he might lose it right there in the kitchen, but unfortunately Devon pulled back before he was able to find out.

"Oh, those numbers." Goddammit, the man was gonna kill him from looks and words alone. He sucked back a groan when Devon suddenly sank to the floor. His strong hands drifted down the sides of Scott's body, fluttering, caressing, scratching.

"Or we could keep track of how many sucks it takes me to get you off. How many times I can stroke you until you scream for me to make you come. Or we could watch a movie."

Scott could barely speak, but he was pretty sure his hearing was still functionable. "Movie?"

Devon grinned up at him. "I'm very versatile."

Oh mother of God, yes he was.

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Devon showed up the following Thursday, only minutes after Scott had arrived home. A black backpack was slung over his shoulder, wicked smirk greeting Scott when he answered the door. Scott cocked an eyebrow and Devon leaned in for a quick kiss.

"Told you I was bringing my laundry. Did you add me to your list?"

He was too flustered for words so Devon just slid past him, his leather-clad body brushing against Scott. "Thought maybe we could go out tonight... music and drinks? If you're game."

"Really?" Scott shut and locked the door behind him—habit, OCD, whatever. The whole situation was out of the norm for what Scott had come to expect from his time with Devon. First of all Devon had only shown up on a Thursday twice before—both times just before eleven. Second, Devon had never arrived

before nine o'clock on any day of the week. And last, they'd never been together anywhere, but at Scott's house except the night they'd met.

He watched as Devon placed his backpack on one of the hooks behind the door, arranging it carefully beside Scott's collection of duffle and grocery store bags, being sure it didn't protrude from the wall or crowd the other bags. Devon must have watched Scott rearrange those bags fifty times and it gave him a happy jolt to see Devon respect his practices despite how whacky they were.

Devon hung up his leather jacket in the closet instead of draping it over a chair the way he'd done in the beginning. He'd started placing his boots beside Scott's shoes in the entryway, perfectly aligned, heels flat against the wall. In some ways it was like Scott had unconsciously trained Devon to his compulsive routine.

"Damn, you look hot in your suit."

Scott focused his mind back on Devon, feeling his whole face heat up with embarrassment. Devon had never seen him in his work clothes and that was exactly the way Scott preferred it. He didn't own designer suits, just off the rack specials that usually *suit*ed him just fine. He tried to excuse himself to change, but Devon snagged his hand and tugged him close.

"Have I ever told you about my suit fantasy?" Devon said between nibbles and licks to Scott's lips. Scott managed to shake his head—barely. "Saw this movie once where the woman undressed the suited dude real slow, except his tie. There was also a desk involved."

Scott wound his arms around Devon's waist, slipping his hands under his t-shirt again while Devon started loosening his tie. There was just something about the strength and curve of Devon's back that made Scott always want to be touching it. "The woman bent the dude over?"

Devon's hands moved to Scott's ass, gripping and pulling them impossibly closer. His mouth moved from the delicious tongue bath he was giving Scott, eyes seeking and finding Scott's. "It was a very kinky movie. Maybe we could try the desk

thing when we get back. You naked except for your tie, bent over the little desk in the kitchen while I plow you from behind. Or you could plow me."

Scott thought he might faint and he definitely got that weak-kneed thing again. "The desk's kind of small." He held off mentioning the carefully organized piles he regularly straightened that would be completely obliterated.

Gyrating his hips and grinding against Scott, Devon licked a stripe down his neck. "I'm sure we can figure it out."

"Now or after we go out?" Scott was ready for now, later and repeat, but he supposed he should wait for Devon's answer before he starting ripping the clothes from his body. The hungry growling of Devon's stomach made the decision for the both of them.

"Sorry," Devon said, chuckling under his breath as he rested his head against Scott's. "We could rustle something up from the fridge or get something at the club. Your choice, babe."

Somehow Scott managed to stay upright, the shaking of his knees at the endearment threatening to send him reeling into Devon's arms like some old-fashioned damsel in distress. He'd never been called *babe* before, or any other form of nickname. At work he was Scott or Mr. Weston and his family had never gone the nickname route, not even *Scottie* which Scott deplored anyhow. But *babe*... babe was special and loving and—oh-my-fucking-God—a name you called someone you were not only attracted to but considered more than just a quick fuck, at least in Scott's mind. It wasn't as though Scott knew absolutely anything about relationships or endearments or exclusivity, but oh-my-fucking-God Devon had called him babe.

"Scott? You're doing that zoning out thing again. You okay?"

Scott sucked in the biggest gulp of air he could manage, swallowing it down with the lump that had been lodged in his throat and threatening to choke him. "No, I mean yes, I'm um... probably just hungry too."

"Club then?"

"Yeah. Just let me change." He pressed his lips to Devon's one last time, letting Devon's taste and scent surround him,

loosening up the rigors of the day, before heading to his bedroom. Devon snagged him again before he got too far.

"Leave the suit on," Devon said, brown eyes so full of mischief, determination, and lust Scott thought he would happily drown. "Please?"

Scott averted his eyes, forcing the want in Devon's chocolate pools from his mind. "Nobody wears a suit there, Dev. I'd feel like everyone was looking at me."

"I'll be looking and loving what I see."

Scott's heart thudded to a halt or at least that's certainly what it felt like. "But won't you be embarrassed to be seen with..."

Devon swallowed Scott's last words, his lips firm but tender and undemanding against Scott's. It was a kiss to soothe or reassure not turn on or amp up. When Devon pulled away his eyes were gentle, soft, full of concern. "I'd like to get my hands on the guy who made you so insecure."

"There was no guy. I've never been with anyone long enough for them to hurt me.." The sentiment was appreciated, but Devon was so far off base Scott wasn't sure he'd ever be able to understand the insecurity that haunted him. He couldn't really expect Devon to ever get it, and he certainly wouldn't want him to ever feel the same way. Scott's insecurity didn't revolve around anyone mistreating him or any one thing anyone had said. It was just how he was—it was just Scott.

"Then why?"

Scott untangled himself from Devon again, stepping away but not turning to leave the room. "Someone like you would never understand." He regretted the words the moment they left his mouth.

"Someone like me?" Devon asked, posture quickly on the defensive; arms crossed over his chest, head cocked to the side, his legs shoulder width apart in a sort of challenge position. "What exactly is someone like me *like*?"

"I didn't mean it that way," Scott said. "We're just different, like two totally opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to lifestyle and attitude and looks."



"I never expected you'd be someone who judged people on looks alone."

"I don't. But you have to admit our experiences in life are partly based on our appearances and how we handle ourselves."

Devon shook his head. "People are too hung up on appearances. One person's beauty is another person's beast. People judge me because I have tattoos and ride a bike which automatically means I'm dumber than a post and have no intellect at all. That's just wrong."

"I agree. You're smarter than most people I know." Scott smiled gently, trying to ease the mood out of confrontation and back into comforting, but obviously Devon hadn't gotten the memo.

"But you think because you have a sensible haircut, wear a suit and work as an accountant that makes you unattractive?"

"It's the geek status I've been accustomed to since I was in grade school."

"But don't you see that's just another label that is neither necessary nor accurate.." Devon scrubbed a hand over his head. "You're not a geek, Scott. You're an attractive, intelligent man who just needs someone to tell him that once in a while."

Scott blushed to his toes, mouth opening to speak but no words coming out. That was probably the nicest thing anyone had ever said to him—ever. Then Devon was holding him again, their chests and thighs pressed tightly together. One of Devon's hands sunk into Scott's hair, gripping the back of his head as Scott returned the embrace with everything he had. Fuck being seen in public in a suit. He could handle it. It seemed he could handle anything and everything if Devon was at his side, though that was exactly what he'd been trying to avoid in both his head and his heart. He'd just have to try harder later because all he could picture at that moment was Devon with his nose tucked in the nape of Scott's neck.

"Think we can call this our first fight?" Devon said against Scott's hair.

Scott chuckled. It felt good to laugh after a tense

conversation. "I dunno. Never had a relationship long enough to have one. You?"

Devon lifted his head, brushing the unruly hair from Scott's forehead and stepping back to look at him. "It's been a long time for me, but fighting with him was never this quiet or contained."

Though he was completely uncomfortable with the topic of the conversation, Scott asked the question in his head anyhow. "Did you... love him?"

Devon's eyes got a far-away look, dullness replacing the bright and making Scott a little sad that he'd asked the question at all. "I thought I did. Probably did at the time, but it was more of a coming-of-age thing, you know? He was my first everything... older, controlling. His definition of love was totally different than mine and eventually I just knew it wasn't right."

"How long?" Scott brushed his fingers down Devon's neck, resting his hand over the pounding of Devon's heart.

Devon sighed, covering Scott's hand with his own. "Two years of thinking nothing I did was right or good enough, but being so in love it didn't matter. I ignored who I really was to please someone who didn't really want me."

"I'm sorry. I can't imagine you being that way."

"I chalk it up to youth. I learned my lesson and I wouldn't take it back for anything. Experience is what life's all about." He smiled that perfect Devon smile. "We okay?"

Scott nodded and grabbed his keys from the table by the door. "Let's go eat. I'm starving."

Devon tilted his head. "Thought you wanted to change?"

"I figure you'll protect me if any bullies get to close."

"I can guarantee that."

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*The Little Shoppe of Jazz* hadn't changed since Scott had met Devon there almost four months before. He hadn't expected it to be different, but it didn't seem as bright and shiny as it had last time. Of course it might only appear that way in his recollections since Devon seemed to make everything bright and shiny all the time.

The Shoppe was a small, intimate club Scott had been going to for a few years—live music, reasonably-priced drinks, people minding their own business. It was comfortable and Scott had always associated his direct comfort with acceptance and non-judgment. He'd given up the gay bars and clubs years before when they just didn't seem to fit what he was looking for. *The Shoppe* had been his familiar haunt ever since. He'd never picked up any guys or even been approached at the club, at least not until Devon showed up.

*"Crowded tonight, huh?"*

*Scott looked up from his wine glass and into stunning, soft brown eyes. He glanced from side to side, figuring the guy had to be talking to someone else. No one ever talked to him in The Shoppe—for that matter no one ever talked to anyone in the club.*

*Licking his lips, Scott curled his hand around the glass, hoping the gesture came off as both casual and friendly—but not too friendly or too casual. "Yeah," he said, clearing his throat after the word came out gruffer than he'd intended. He pointed to the musician readying his horn in the corner. "He always pulls a big crowd."*

*"Any good?" the beauty asked, setting his beer down beside Scott's glass.*

*"Yeah, he's um... yeah, he's good." Scott dipped his head again, tracing the lip of his glass with his index finger giving him something to do with his hands. He wished the butterflies in his belly would go flutter somewhere else.*

*"You mind if I share your table?"*

*Scott whipped his head up so fast his vision dotted with black spots. He snuck a look around the room. It was busy but there were a few tables and chairs empty so why did this guy...*

*"It's okay, man. I'll go somewhere else."*

*"No!" Shit, that came out wrong. "I mean... you can sit here if you want."*

*A dimpled smile met his eyes. "I want. Thanks."*

*The next few minutes were spent in silence while the night's entertainment continued to set up. Scott's stomach was*

*cluttered with the nasty little butterflies that refused to flutter the hell away and he couldn't quite figure out why he was so nervous. It was only two guys enjoying some music and sharing a table, there was nothing more to it. Just because the guy was hotter than holy hell and seemed to stare longingly into his eyes didn't mean Scott had to act like it was a date.*

*"Name's Devon."*

*Scott shook the extended hand, noticing the contrast between soft skin and callouses on Devon's hand. "Oh sorry. I'm Scott."*

*Devon smiled, all plump sexy lips, straight white teeth, and oh yeah, dimples. "Come here often, Scott?"*

*The pick-up line made Scott chuckle. "Yeah. You?"*

*Devon shook his head, draining the rest of his beer and picking at the label. "First time. I like it. It's quiet and kind of mysterious."*

*Scott snorted then covered his mouth with his hand. "Quiet, yes, but mysterious? Not so much."*

*"You seem a little mysterious."*

*"That is so far from the truth." Scott's face warmed from the neck up while he silently thanked the owners of The Shoppe for the very dim lighting.*

*Devon's smile faded a little, eyes still twinkling with mischief as he touched Scott's hand. "Another round?"*

*Scott shook his head. "You don't have to buy me a drink."*

*Devon shrugged and smirked. "What if I want to?"*

*They had another round then a couple more after that. Scott was grateful when the music started and he didn't have to try and keep his composure with Devon any longer. He couldn't help sneaking a few looks at his tablemate though. Damn he was fine and so not Scott's type. Well, not exactly not his type, but not the type Scott had ever considered he'd ever be able to call his type.*

*He noticed Devon watching him a few times as well, but chalked it up to mere curiosity at Scott's out-of-date hairstyle or his non-descript shirt and pants. There was nothing boring about Devon. He wore a tight black t-shirt, black jeans and a black*

leather jacket that he'd draped over the back of his chair. Most men would look dull, too trendy, or like they were trying too hard when they dressed all in black, but Devon wore it like a cloak of mystery. Yet he'd said Scott was the mysterious one?

The tattoos decorating both Devon's arms were enough to take dull entirely out of the equation, and if Scott had more time and been less wary of being caught, he would have stared at them all night. He'd never been with a tattooed man, never even had one as a friend, and the whole designing your body with permanent ink thing was cool, but foreign to him.

Devon's face was five o'clock shadow to the tenth degree, not exactly a beard but not trimmed neat and tidy like most of the men in the club. Something told Scott that Devon didn't often conform to what others thought or said. It was refreshing.

"You have incredible eyes." The remark came just after the musician had taken a fifteen-minute break, Devon's eyes wrinkling at the corners when he said it. Scott was more than a little shell-shocked.

"I'm sorry." Devon squinted at Scott. "Maybe I got the wrong impression of you?"

"Impression?"

"I thought you might be interested in me."

Scott nearly had a coronary. People... men did not just come out and say things like that to him. Fuck, did they actually say that to anyone? He was vaguely aware he was sitting there with his mouth hanging open and quickly brought his glass to his lips, taking a large gulp and proceeding to ungracefully choke on his wine.

Devon reached over and patted him on the back, the palm of his hand burning a hole through Scott's shirt right to the skin. "Goddamn. I've never had that reaction before," he joked. "You okay?"

Scott gave one last cough, nodding his head as he sorted his thoughts. "Yeah. Sorry. I'm obviously not the most elegant date."

"Date?"

"Oh fuck. I didn't mean..."

*"Does that mean you're interested?"*

*Scott reached into the depths of his dusty bravery, finally looking up into Devon's eyes. "Of course. Who wouldn't be?"*

*Devon laughed and it was almost musical. Scott relaxed back into his chair, the burning in his throat disappearing and a half-smile curling his lips. "We can go to um... my place if you want."*

*"I want," Devon repeated. "But I don't mind sticking around for a bit. No rush, right? Or are you the quick and easy type?"*

*Quick and easy was certainly one way to describe their first night together. They'd both already been half hard when they left the club. Devon said he couldn't ride his motorcycle in his present condition so Scott had driven them both back to his place with Devon's hand strategically placed on Scott's thigh the whole way.*

*"Nice place. Where's the bedroom?"*

*Scott liked Devon's attitude, liked everything about him, and as hard as falling into bed with a beautiful stranger was he made the sacrifice whole-heartedly. Devon slipped out of his jacket, letting it fall to the floor at his feet.*

*"Do you kiss?"*

*Scott was surprised at Devon's question but the sincerity in his eyes told him it was valid. "Do I? Why?"*

*Devon shrugged, stepping closer to Scott, his hand slipping behind Scott's neck. "Been with guys who don't, but personally I like to kiss."*

*Oh fuck, yes.*

*Scott moved in first, rising up on his toes and capturing Devon's lips. It was bold and determined and so not how Scott usually was, but it felt better than anything he'd felt before. Devon pulled him hard against his chest, hands moving to cup Scott's ass while he ground their hips together.*

*They licked and sucked at each other's mouths, testing the waters slowly before Devon poked then slid his tongue between Scott's lips. Scott drew it in, sucking on the tip then twining and twisting it with his own. Kissing a man who wasn't trying too hard was a treat; no slobbery salivating, no tongue reaching for*

Scott's tonsils, and no unnecessary grinding of lips and teeth. Devon kissed with his whole body—there was nothing better than that.

"You're a great kisser," Scott groaned when he pulled away, breathless as his heart thumped against his ribcage and his dick throbbed in his pants.

"You talk too much," Devon said, slipping his fingers under the hem of Scott's shirt. "And you have way too many clothes on." The shirt was easily removed, the buttons ignored as Devon yanked it over Scott's head.

"I'm not the one who's always talking," Scott replied, returning the favor when he removed Devon's tight t-shirt the same way. He gulped back a gasp of surprise when two beautiful silver rings were revealed on Devon's chest. "Maybe you need something to keep your mouth busy."

Scott was surprised again by his boldness, but it had grand results when he was shoved backward and his ass hit the bed. Devon was automagically on top of him, kissing, licking, groping, shoving his hand down Scott's pants. Warm fingers wrapped around Scott's cock, the lack of space not hindering Devon's stroking and touching.

"Take them off," Scott said, sucking in his belly as Devon went to work on his button and zipper. His pants were roughly shoved down his hips and over his thighs, tangling at his ankles and just left that way. He didn't mind, especially after Devon's hot mouth fully engulfed his dick and his balls tightened to his body.

"Holy hell... wanna touch you, too." He was slightly embarrassed he was already leaking down Devon's throat from a few well-manuevered sucks and gropes, but damn he hadn't had sex or even a blowjob in a really long time.

"Jesus, Devon," he gasped when Devon took him deeper, the tip of his cock bumping up against the back of Devon's throat. In his before life—his before Devon life—he may have wondered how Devon had become such an expert cock sucker, but right then nothing mattered but feeling those soft lips stretched around his girth.

*He moaned deep in his throat when Devon's fingers found his balls and the sensitive patch behind them, lightly rubbing and scratching, threatening to send Scott over the edge.*

*"Dammit, let me suck you, too." He was aggravated that he couldn't touch and taste. He fisted his fingers in Devon's hair when Devon's hand slid up and over his quivering body, Scott's belly going guitar-string taut then all fluttery and warm when fingers circled his belly button and then moved up to his chest.*

*Scott tugged harder in Devon's hair until he was finally released with an echoing "pop".*

*"After you come," Devon said, moving back up Scott's body to capture his lips in a sloppy, but perfect kiss. "You taste delicious. If I wasn't trying to make a good first impression, I'd probably go off in my pants right now."*

*"Oh hell, don't say stuff like that," Scott said, face flushed from more than just having his dick sucked and stroked. Devon had a definite way of making him blush and he was immensely glad for the dimness of the room he hoped hid the redness high in his cheeks, though it didn't do a damn thing to lessen the sexy sparkle in Devon's eyes.*

*"How you wanna do this?" Devon said, smothering Scott's mouth in another kiss that ended in sweet little nips and sucks to Scott's bottom lip. He pulled Scott to his side, slipping one of his legs between Scott's thighs while his knee moved gently back and forth over Scott's dick.*

*"The usual way?" Scott offered, too caught up in the sensations running through his body and brain. He wasn't sure if Devon had been serious about coming in his jeans, but dammit if Scott wasn't literally afraid he might go off just from kissing Devon, never mind having Devon's knee rub over his cock.*

*"You want me to..."*

*"Oh, God yes. Are you always this annoyingly polite? Lube and condoms - top drawer. And get those goddamn pants off before I revisit my teenage premature ejaculation."*

*Bold and witty; who knew Scott could be both at the same time and in such a desperate situation. He kicked his legs, trying to free them of the pants that still held his ankles hostage.*



*Devon finally helped him out, tugging so hard Scott nearly slid off the bed, the both of them bursting out laughing at the ridiculousness of the situation. The snick of the lube tube broke the spell and Scott rose up to his rest on his elbows, spreading his legs wide and watching Devon wiggle out of his jeans at the same time he ripped open the condom wrapper with his teeth.*

*Devon slipped the latex over his rock-hard dick and Scott moaned a little in despair that he hadn't been able to feel Devon's length in his hand, his mouth. His dramatic moment was short-lived when Devon crawled between his legs and kissed him, deep and hungry, the two of them breathless before too long. He flinched when a cool, sticky finger brushed over his hole then broke the kiss momentarily to stare into Devon's eyes.*

*"Slow?" Devon said, shifting his body so he rested more on the bed and less on Scott. "When's the last time you—"*

*Scott narrowed his eyes, hips rising off the bed in an effort to encourage Devon to hurry the hell up. "Did I mention you talk too much? It's been a while, but if you don't do it soon, you won't be doing it at all."*

*Devon's laugh was like magic dust being tossed into the room, making everything dazzling and shiny. He assaulted Scott's lips again just before Scott felt the first breaching of his body: slow, but firm, Devon's finger pressing in and circling the outside a few times before twisting back inside.*

*An involuntary moan escaped Scott's throat, partly pain, partly pleasure, but all hurry-the-fuck-up. He lifted his hips again, bearing down on the finger and forcing it further inside his passage. It had been a long time since he'd bottomed, but hell if he was going to let that stop him from climaxing with Devon firmly implanted in his ass.*

*Devon sucked Scott's bottom lip between his teeth, one finger becoming two as he followed Scott's forceful instructions. He fucked both fingers in and out, faster and harder with each twist and stab, the added curl at the end spiking little promises of impending orgasm straight to Scott's cock.*

*"Enough," Scott demanded against Devon's lips. He could barely form a thought in his head let alone complete a full*

sentence. "Cock not fingers." Devon complied with a grunt, replacing his fingers with the head of his dick, slowly breaching Scott's ass. Scott moaned. "Move, Devon."

Devon pushed in a little further, Scott's body seizing momentarily, the muscles in his ass clenching and unclenching. He fought the pain for a moment before that sweet feeling of his muscles releasing washed over him and his body finally welcomed the intrusion. Devon paused, eyes meeting Scott's in a silent question. Scott answered by bucking his hips upward, the motion impaling Devon's cock further into his ass, the pleasure/pain rocking his entire body.

After a few shallow thrusts, Devon wrapped his hand around Scott's calf, stretching his leg up and to the side. He let his dick slip out then impaled himself fully, pounding in and out of Scott with no holds barred. Scott's dick pulsed against his belly, leaking profusely while his fingers curled and clenched in the blanket beneath him. He gasped out small breaths, his whole body shifting and jolting at the force of Devon's thrusts. It was harsh and unforgiving and took only minutes for Scott's hips to surge up, deepening the thrusts to his sweet spot. He shot all over himself in a rush of orgasmic happiness. He'd never climaxed before without being touched, and it was an amazing feeling.

He continued to roll and grind his hips upward, feeling Devon's thighs stiffen against him before a burst of warmth filled the condom. He wrapped a hand around Devon's thigh, fingertips digging into the flesh, silently encouraging Devon to keep moving as long as he wanted, to fuck him through the aftershocks Scott could feel vibrating through Devon's body. Several more hard thrusts and Devon's cock slipped out, his body collapsing on the bed beside Scott.

Scott lay still on his back, his come sticky and drying on his belly. He didn't know whether he should give Devon some post-coital space or cuddle into him like he really wanted to. His worry abated when Devon's head landed on his chest with a thud; he was still gasping for breath yet was soft, pliant, and

*boneless against Scott.*

*"Awesome," Devon said while Scott breathed in his scent; sweat, musk, a little beer, and some motor oil mixed with pure sex. "Another round or you want me to leave?"*

*Not knowing exactly what to say to such a preposterous question nor having had anyone ask to stay before, Scott stepped out of his self-contained comfort zone and wrapped his arms around Devon's back. He held him close, even kissed the top of his messy hair when Devon didn't move away. "Give me a minute and we can go again."*

*"A minute, huh? That's pretty quick. I think I need a few more than that, and I really have to get rid of this condom." Devon laughed against Scott's chest, against Scott's heart, and said heart skipped a beat.*

*He loosened his hold on Devon, shifting slightly and reaching down to carefully pluck the spent condom from Devon's dick. He tossed it to the floor, something he knew he would totally regret in the morning when he realized how disgusting that was in the light of day. He proceeded to lick the sticky fluid from his fingers, drawing a groan and sexy kiss from Devon.*

*"Need anything while we recuperate?" he asked, knowing he needed absolutely nothing but to lie there and feel Devon pressed against him. He had a propensity to get attached quickly in certain situations and he knew this could be one of those.*

*Devon never answered, his soft breathy snores settling warmly on Scott's chest. Scott breathed a sigh of relief, then closed his eyes. He never imagined his hot one night stand would show up unexpectedly the following weekend and keep coming back...*

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*They didn't sit at the table where they'd met; that would have been just a little too weird and juvenile. He didn't need to reveal all the sappiness that he tried so hard to keep hidden away. They took a table on the other side of the room, about*

the same distance from the small stage in the corner, far enough away to still be able to chat a little if need be.

Scott smiled a little to himself when Devon rested his hand on his lower back when they were winding their way through the crowd. He knew Devon was only guiding him to the table, but it still gave him a bit of a thrill. They took their seats, draped their coats over their chairs and folded their hands on the table in front of them. It was an awkward moment in a situation that shouldn't have been awkward at all. When Devon reached over and snugged a finger under the knot in Scott's tie, pulling it open until it hung loosely around his neck, it didn't so much take away from the awkward as add a touch of excitement too.

"Are you trying to freak me out?" Scott said. He let his eyes drift past Devon's grin to the tables behind and to the side.

Devon shook his head, dimples taking up all of Scott's oxygen. "Not at all. Guess you don't want me to undo your top buttons then?"

"No!" Scott felt that damn flush rise in his cheeks again. "I can do it myself." He laughed, making a mental decision to try and loosen up more than his tie. Being out with Devon was what he'd wanted, so why ruin the experience with his insecurities? He'd never had a man do anything quite so intimate to him in public before, and with his track record, untying his tie was considered intimate.

"The waitress looks pretty busy. I'll go up and get our drinks. That okay?"

"Grab a couple of menus too. I'm starving."

Devon replied with another smile, brushing the top of Scott's hand as he pushed his chair back and stood up. Scott wasn't sure what kind of drink he'd end up with but he didn't care. He was pleasantly surprised when Devon brought back the exact varietal he'd been drinking on the night they met.

"You have a good memory," Scott said after Devon had settled back into his chair.

"I'm not just another pretty face." Devon took a sip of his beer and curled his fingers around the bottle. "I think we already established things aren't always how they appear."

“Never thought you were.”

“What? Pretty?”

Scott chuckled, leaning to the side and bumping his shoulder against Devon’s shoulder. “No, you’re definitely pretty.”

“Why thank you.” Devon did a little bow in his seat. “Does that mean I’m going to get lucky tonight?”

“I’m already lucky.” Oh crap. Scott hadn’t meant to say it out loud but now it was on the damn table and he hoped Devon would take the high road and ignore it.

“Me too.”

Lucky for Scott or maybe for both of them, the music started at that moment. The lights dimmed further and Scott’s nerves settled down and let him just listen, just enjoy. The performer was a Latin-based jazz musician whose catchy rhythms kept the crowd pin-dropping quiet with admiration. Scott loved jazz music and Devon seemed to enjoy it too, though if Scott had to put a label on what he thought Devon’s kind of music was, jazz wouldn’t have been his first guess.

Halfway through the first set, Scott felt Devon’s hand slide over his thigh like a swoosh of warmth headed straight for his cock and rest near his knee. He fought the urge to push it away, not afraid of someone seeing the show of affection, but fearful of the rush of joy that struck him dead in the center of his heart. He snuck a glance at Devon, who appeared to be totally engaged in the music. Scott let his eyes travel over the disheveled hair, the strong, five o’clock shadowed jaw, the sexy lips, the kind eyes. He felt happy and he was sure nothing could take that rush away from him.

When the first set ended, Devon slid his hand away and Scott sat up straight in his chair, stretching his arms in front of him only to have his hand grabbed and held by Devon.

“The guy’s really good,” Devon said.

“Yeah, I think he’s been here before,” Scott replied, letting his hand drop to the table, still enclosed by Devon’s. “I don’t usually do this you know.”

“Listen to music?”

“You’re such a smart-ass.”

“You can push me away anytime.”

Scott snorted. “How stupid would that make me?” Devon did that endearing confused-head-tilting thing again. “Oh come on. Look at you and look at me. I’d have to be stark raving mad to let you go.”

Devon didn’t look pleased with Scott’s answer and he proved it by pulling his hand away. “Why does it always have to come back to that, Scott? You give yourself no credit and what, I’m just supposed to sit here and stroke my own ego for letting you be with me? That’s not how I see our relationship at all.”

To say Scott was taken aback by the rough tone of Devon’s voice was an understatement. He hadn’t meant to upset Devon on their first night out together. Fuck, he never wanted to upset Devon at all; all Devon did was make Scott’s life better.

“I’m sorry,” he said, leaning closer to Devon, who had sat back in his chair. “I don’t know any other way to act, Dev. I’ve never been the guy who attracted anyone other than someone exactly like myself.”

“That has nothing to do with this.”

“You make me nervous, which in all fairness I do pretty well all on my own, but still... it’s just weird that you and I are...” Scott sighed. “Whatever the hell we are.”

Devon leaned in so he was almost nose-to-nose with Scott. “I like you, Scott. Aren’t I making it clear about how I feel? Just tell me exactly what might make you comfortable with me.”

Scott sighed again, dipping his head, his forehead brushing against Devon’s. “I am comfortable, but telling myself this will last is not something I can do.”

“Protecting yourself?”

Scott lifted his head to peer into Devon’s eyes. “I guess so. I have a really good time with you. No, that’s a lie. I have a great time with you and you’re what I look forward to at the end of the week, or if I’m lucky, half-way through.” He smiled, hoping the gesture would be contagious to Devon. He didn’t want the night to end on a sour note, especially after he’d waited so long for the two of them to step outside the walls of his house.

“So maybe I look forward to seeing you too? Would you believe me if I said that?”

Scott shrugged, a half-smile curling one side of his mouth. “I guess I could try.”

“Alright then, yeah. I look forward to seeing you too. Why else would I show up when I could obviously have any man anywhere?”

“That was a joke, right?”

“God, I hope so since I feel kind of dirty now.”

They laughed out loud at the same time, Scott’s anxiety squeaking out with one of his chuckles. He hoped it stayed away this time. He was about to ask Devon if he wanted another drink when they were interrupted.

“Devastation? What the fuck, man? What are you doing in a place like this?”

The man behind the voice threw himself between Scott and Devon, slapping Devon on the back and replacing their laughter with his own. “I can’t fucking believe it’s you. I’m such a huge fan. Are you guys play—”

“I think you have me confused with someone else,” Devon said, cutting the man off, his eyes narrowed. He turned back to Scott. “Do you mind if we cut out early? I’m suddenly not feeling so hot.”

“Yo’, man, can I get an autograph?”

Devon shoved back his chair, grabbing the man by his arm and yanking him close. “I said you must be mistaken. Now back the fuck off.”

Scott watched the interaction with amazement. Devon’s jaw was clenched, the little muscles on the sides twitching with the strain. He let the man go, skewering him with a look Scott didn’t understand but whatever it was, it did the job. The man stepped back and turned away.

“Dev? What’s going on?”

Devon shook his head, grabbing his jacket from the back of the chair and hastily putting it on. “Nothing. Guy thought I was someone else. Didn’t like how he got in my face. You ready?”

The ride back to Scott’s place was quiet, the air thick with

tension. Devon stared out the passenger window, his hands folded in his lap. He flinched when Scott reached over and stroked his thigh, but then relaxed and covered Scott's hand with his own.

"You okay?" Scott said, when they stopped at a red light. "Did I..."

"I'm fine. Didn't mean to spoil the evening." Devon shot Scott a half-smile, and then went back to staring out into the darkness.

"That guy..."

"He reminded me of a guy I used to know."

"Not a good memory."

"Nope. Light's green."

When they arrived back at Scott's, Devon mumbled something about a shower before heading off in that direction. He'd given Scott no indication he wanted company so Scott hung up both their coats, checked his answering machine, and then went to his room. Devon sat on the bed, body leaned forward, head resting in his hands. He hadn't taken his clothes off or even started the water in the shower, and Scott was baffled as to what was going on.

"Dev?"

"Hey," Devon said as if he hadn't heard Scott come in. He lifted his head, but no smile appeared on his downcast face. "You wanna shower?"

Scott moved farther into the room. "No. You go ahead. I'll shower in the morning."

"I don't really feel like it either."

"Would you rather go home tonight?"

Devon cocked his head, the usual sparkle in his eyes replaced by clouds. "You want me to?"

"No," Scott said quickly. "But you said you weren't feeling well."

"I think I just need some sleep," Devon said, hauling himself to his feet. His actions were more old-manish than Devonish, and Scott wondered if something was really wrong with him. "I know I promised... you know, the desk?"



Scott smirked, moving closer until he was inches from Devon. “The desk’s not going anywhere. I have to get up early for a meeting in any case, but I’d like you to stay.”

Devon closed the gap, wrapping Scott tightly in his arms in a desperate hug. He returned the embrace, kissing the side of Devon’s head and nuzzling his neck. “Let’s go to bed, Dev. You need to rest up if you’re gonna tackle the desk.” That drew a small snicker from Devon, his tense body relaxing a little against Scott.

Scott kissed him again, before untangling them and taking a small step back. Devon’s eyes were half-closed, his face drawn and expressionless. “Get your clothes off, mister. You know the bare sleeping rule.”

Devon managed a tiny curl of his lips, and then yanked his t-shirt over his head. He stepped back to Scott, his fingers slipping under the knot of Scott’s tie, gently undoing it and tugging on the ends of the tie. “You’ll have to wear this again when I have the strength to do something interesting with it.” He tugged the tie again, dragging Scott closer and kissing him tenderly.

“Interesting?” Scott said. He leaned up for another kiss, lapping and licking over Devon’s lips before he pulled away. “Hmm, can’t wait.”

They finished undressing, each taking a turn in the bathroom to wash up, and then crawled under the covers. Devon rolled onto his side, shifting until his back was pressed against Scott’s chest. Scott slid his arms around him, kissing the back of his neck and snuggling his nose in his nape. Devon twined their fingers together, sighed, and fell quiet.

Scott had questions about the evening, but sometimes things had to play out on their own. It seemed like this was one of those times. Devon was struggling with something, but Scott didn’t want to press him until he was ready or asked for help. He snuggled in tighter to Devon, right leg slipping between Devon’s so they were as close as humanly possible. Closing his eyes, Scott willed sleep to take him.

Early morning brought more kissing and reciprocal hand-jobs before a kissy-feely shower session. Then Scott was off to

work, leaving a towel-wrapped Devon to lock up and leave whenever he was ready. It was domestic to the point of Scott feeling a little dose of panic tighten his chest, but he managed to shrug it off, the image of a half-naked Devon helping him get through the day.

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Saturday nights became like clockwork, with Devon showing up just before midnight, tired from a long week but not too tired to spend time with Scott. They talked a little but generally that was their night to fuck themselves into exhaustion, and then curl up together in Scott's bed. It was a routine Scott hadn't sought out—hadn't been his idea in the first place—but it made their relationship seem more real. Devon showed up on other nights as well, but Saturday nights and Sundays had been designated as *Devon time*, at least in Scott's head.

Sunday mornings were pretty routine, as well. No, routine wasn't the right word—it implied their day was boring and mundane—and that was exactly what it wasn't. The day generally started the same way, with Scott doing his stalker act and then making coffee (and one horrible-smelling tea or another). It was comfortable and comforting and Scott felt a familiarity and intimacy between him and Devon that he'd never felt with anyone else. They never talked about what had happened their evening out or what was happening between them, and Scott wasn't even sure if anything was happening at all for Devon. Maybe he just needed a place to crash on Saturday nights and somewhere to chill out on Sundays, but for Scott it was so much more than that—so much more.

They took turns making breakfast, nothing scheduled or set in stone, but it had definitely become a Sunday morning ritual. Scott's breakfast usually consisted of scrambled eggs and toast while Devon was more creative with fluffy cheese, veggie or spicier-than-fuck omelets. He always added some sort of fruit to the plate along with grits and sausage or bacon. Those added items were things he'd began to bring with him, along with

oranges for the fresh-squeezed juice he liked so much.

Scott had mulled over the idea of having Devon just add to his shopping list every week but the notion was shot down in his brain before it saw the light of day. It was far too domestic and bold for Scott to even be thinking that way, and Devon did not seem like a domesticated guy in any sense of the word.

Late mornings and afternoons were spent on the sun porch or the couch, the two of them snuggled together reading or doing a Sudoku or Kakuro puzzle—Scott was not a fan of crosswords, but numbers he could relate to. They talked, but never about anything too personal, though Devon did ask more questions about Scott than he answered about himself. He was a master at changing the subject or distracting Scott away from whatever he'd asked, not a hard task when all he really had to do was throw a dimple Scott's way, and Scott wasn't inclined to rock the boat anyhow.

There was quiet kissing and fondling, but the heat level on Sundays was like the day itself; lazy, relaxed, contented—unless there was a Saints game on of course. One Sunday found Scott and Devon cuddling on the comfy settee on the sun porch. Devon had his eyes closed and head tilted back, his rugged face sucking up all the light and warmth in the room while Scott leisurely mapped out and traced the magnificent designs and colors on Devon's left arm.

"This face on your arm, an ex-girlfriend maybe?"

Devon chuckled, eyes staying closed, arm twitching a little where Scott was touching. "Not even close and for the record, never had one of those."

Scott leaned over and licked at the spot he'd been tracing. Another amazing thing about Devon; he was ticklish as all hell. Scott had no idea how he'd managed to get so many tattoos, except of course that would have been more pain than tickling.

"You didn't even let one girl get into your pants? I find that hard to believe."

Devon's head moved from side to side against the back of the settee. "I was a very good boy when I was young. Always knew I was gay, too."

"Poor deprived girls." Scott traced over the woman's face again. "Kind of looks like 80's Madonna."

Devon laughed, his voice filling the quiet day with nothing but happy.

"Okay, another swing and a miss. I was going to say she looks like the Virgin Mary but you don't seem the type."

"Bingo."

Scott reached out, cradling one side of Devon's face, turning it toward him until those chocolate brown eyes opened. "Bingo you're not the type or..."

"It's the Virgin Mary," Devon said, his sweet smile aimed directly at Scott's heart.

"Was it a dare or something?"

Devon kept on grinning but something changed in his eyes, a far-off look settling there. "My mom was very religious. It's sort of a tribute to her."

Devon closed his eyes again while Scott ghosted his fingers over the plains of his face, mapping the strong cheekbones, the soft cheeks with just the hint of dimples, the stubbly, masculine jawline. "Seems like a strange thing to ask of a son."

"I did it after she died."

Letting his fingers fall from Devon's face, Scott shifted his body away. "Oh crap. I'm sorry."

Devon shrugged off the apology. "How could you have known?"

"What did she... how did she—"

"Cancer."

"I'm so sorry, sweetheart. How long's it been?" Scott hadn't meant for the endearment to slip out, but it felt so natural in the situation. Luckily, Devon didn't seem to notice.

"About eight months ago." Scott felt Devon's fingers slip into his. "She would have liked you."

Scott ignored the comment, not relishing the thought his blandness would be high on any parents' list of positive attributes for a partner for their adorable son. "She supported your lifestyle despite her religion?"

Devon cracked open one eye, the hint of a smile gracing his

lips. "Oh yeah. She was my biggest fan. I could tell her anything and I did. Not sure she would have liked you thinking the Virgin Mary was Madonna though."

"Fuck me. I don't think I could come off as more of a weenie." He tried to untangle his fingers from Devon's, but was tugged and dragged until he ended up sprawled backwards over Devon's lap.

"I don't date weenies so I think you're okay." Devon smirked and leaned over to kiss Scott. It was sweet, tender, but as had been the case lately, such teasing from Devon only brought out questions and concerns for Scott.

"Is that what we're doing, Devon?"

Devon's fingers rubbed over the tight muscles at Scott's nape. "Can you be more specific?"

Scott cringed. "You said you don't date weenies. Are we dating then?"

"Well, we've been getting together for a few months now. Not every day but a lot—"

"Thirty-one times." *Oh, holy hell. Why did he have to say that?*

"Huh? Is that how many days we were together or how many times we had sex?"

Devon's sexy smirk might have been contagious had Scott not been positively mortified. He tried to move but Devon's strong arms held him hostage. "I can't believe I said that. Here I am trying to have a serious conversation and I end up sounding like Rainman."

"I liked Rainman if that makes a difference."

"It doesn't and I'm sorry. I honestly didn't sit down and mark off on my calendar how many times we were together."

"It's okay as long as you used little red hearts to do it." Damn Devon and his cute.

"I'm serious, Devon. All my life my big brain has gotten me ridiculed or made fun of and now, when I want exactly the opposite, I just act like a... a—"

"Weenie?" Devon snorted.

"Thanks."

"I don't think it's a big deal. I like your big brain and all the other big things you've got... a lot." Devon wagged his thick eyebrows and if Scott had been standing, his knees would have weakened yet again. All his swooning and knee-weakening was beginning to make him feel like his favorite heroine, Scarlet O'Hara. Instead, he needed to channel Cher and snap the fuck out of it.

"Really? But we're so different." It was hard to believe Devon was being serious, and like a child anticipating Christmas, Scott didn't want to get his hopes up.

Devon shrugged. "Wouldn't want to date myself, would I? Differences are what make people unique. I'm sure there's a lot of things you think are really strange about me."

Scott narrowed his eyes at Devon. "Stranger than making the same list week after week and knowing exactly how many times you've made love with your boyfriend. I mean, had sex—"

"Way weirder and I like the boyfriend thing, too."

"Great. It only makes it sound like we're in fourth grade not second."

"See," Devon said, rubbing his knuckles over the top of Scott's head—a sixth grade noogie perhaps? "That there, what you just did. That sarcastic humor thing. I dig that. It's uniquely you. I'm not so into the beating yourself up but we can work on that."

"Name one thing."

"Huh?" Devon narrowed his eyes.

"That makes you weird."

"Sexual or non?"

"Devon."

Devon forced out a long sigh. "I still have my dead cat's collar in my sock drawer at home."

"That's not weird." That was freaking adorable.

"She died when I was ten, Scott."

Scott finally managed to pull himself up, sitting cross-legged as he faced Devon. "Aww. That's so sweet."

"And a little weird."

"Yeah, maybe, but definitely more sweet than weird. What

was her name?"

Devon's words were more muttered than spoken. "Smoky... Grey-Grey." Was that a tinge of red in Devon's cocky cheeks?

"What?"

Devon blew out a breath before averting his gaze. "I called her Smoky Grey-Grey."

Scott wanted to dance with delight. "God, if my grandmother were here she'd just wanna pinch your cheeks so hard."

"Which ones?"

"You're impossible." Scott was amazed at Devon's propensity to turn a simple statement involving a wrinkly old woman into a sexual innuendo—amazed.

"That mean you don't want me to go down on you?"

"Christ, no." He was sure Devon was trying to stop his heart but how could he not play along? "On your knees and pay your penance for impossibility."

"Yes, Father."

"Oh no. Don't go there... but that spot... oh Hallelujah! Yes, that one's a keeper."

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The beginning of the end came ironically on one of those lazy Sundays they both loved so much. It was after their fourth month *together*. They'd had a particularly late Saturday night, but unfortunately not for any kinky or untoward reasons. Scott had waited patiently for Devon to show up; midnight turned to one o'clock, then eventually turned to two. He hadn't even known if Devon was coming over, but Devon hadn't missed a Saturday in three weeks, so Scott had unwittingly developed a pattern of waiting up for him.

Devon had finally arrived a little after two and he'd been drunk as a skunk at a bring-your-own-stink party. The poor man had apologized up one side of Scott and down the other, promising to make amends for the injustice he'd done. Scott thought he was cuter than hell but let him grovel a little before

tugging the clothes from his body and shoving him in the shower.

He hadn't even tried to cop a feel when Devon's guilty, goofy grins turned to half-closed eyes and an almost boneless wet body. Scott had managed to wrangle Devon from the bathroom, tucking him still-damp under the clean sheets and promising to come right back after he turned off the lights in the living room. Devon had tried hard to look sexy as his head continued to loll and a little drool slipped from the corner of his forced smile.

When Scott came back Devon was already out like a light, but managed to maul Scott into a suitable sleeping position when Scott crawled in beside him. Scott had gone to sleep feeling satisfied, complete with the terrifying knowledge that he was completely in love with Devon.

He was awoken only a few hours later by a strong hand wrapped around his cock and Devon's beer-laden breath brushing over his lips. Scott pushed him away, checking to see if Devon was indeed awake before shoving him to his back and straddling his body. He was horny as hell and going by the hardness pressing against his cock, Devon was ready, willing, and able.

Devon grabbed for his dick again, but Scott batted his hand away, circling his fingers around Devon's wrist and hoisting Devon's right arm above his head. He kneed Devon's legs apart, and then situated himself between them, pressing down on top of Devon, their groins flush and bodies already squirming with desire. Devon groaned and lifted his head to capture Scott's mouth and Scott obliged with a hard crush of his lips, sending Devon's head back into the pillow.

The kiss was raw and needy with no kindness or respect involved, just lusty passion that Scott feared would eat away at him if he didn't meld himself with Devon. Devon's left hand tried to wiggle between their bodies, but Scott was having none of it. He shoved it up and over Devon's head, securing it alongside Devon's left hand, and then peered down into Devon's face.



“Wanna fuck you, Dev,” he said, sucking Devon’s bottom lip between his teeth. He nipped at it, tasting the tell-tale metallic flavor of blood before swiping the wetness away with his tongue. Devon groaned but remained silent. “But I’m not going to.”

Letting out another deep groan, Devon struggled to free his hands, still held firmly against the mattress. “Fuck me,” he hissed.

His body surged up when Scott gyrated his hips, rubbing and grinding their dicks together while his mouth slammed down on Devon’s again. The friction was hot to the point of being painful so Scott let up a little, moving his hips and groin slower over Devon’s body.

“Goddamn,” Devon hissed. “Feels so good. Let me go, Scott.”

Scott stopped his movement, his cock protesting by leaking a thin string of pre-come onto Devon’s dick. “No touching,” he said. He fisted a chunk of Devon’s hair before tilting back his head and pressing down on his dick again. “Promise.”

Devon nodded, eyes dark with lust. Scott released Devon’s hands, pleased when they moved immediately to his back and not between their bodies. He wanted control and he was going to have it.

“Are you gonna fuck me?”

“No. I like this just fine.” He rolled his hips, Devon’s hands gripping the cheeks of his ass and pressing their bodies impossibly closer together. “Complaints?”

Devon answered with a growl and a kiss, biting at Scott’s lips while they rutted together, bodies moving as one, dicks gliding and slipping over each other with an exchange of pre-come. Devon shifted his legs further apart, lifting and wrapping them around Scott’s waist as their movements became less rhythmic, more stuttered, panicked, desperate.

The kiss ended, but their mouths stayed together, barely touching, heavy breaths of lust and need mingling together in hot bursts of air. Devon’s fingers dug painfully into Scott’s ass and he tilted his head back before his body ceased moving and a

rush of fluid splashed against Scott's belly. His redoubled his efforts, flattening his body between Devon's thighs before moving his head to the crook of Devon's neck and shoulder. He nipped at the sweaty flesh, enjoying the feel of Devon's legs wrapped around him. He slid his body again and again against Devon's until his cock finally pulsed and released.

Devon held him tight through the aftershocks, one hand moving to slide up and down over Scott's back. Scott struggled for breath, his hips still rutting on top of Devon until there was no more energy to be found. He let his body go limp, winding one hand behind Devon's neck, fingers twisting in the damp strands of his hair. Devon's legs dropped from around his waist. He pressed a soft kiss to Scott's face, mumbled something that sounded like "gotta get clean" or "gotta come clean" then relaxed back into sleep.

Scott wasn't sure if Devon wanted him to clean them both up or if he'd said something else entirely, and he was too damn tired and spent to care. He shifted his body a little to the side, feeling the sticky drag of come gluing their skin together as he pulled the blanket over them both before repositioning himself with his head on Devon's chest. When Devon's arms automatically wrapped around Scott's back, he kissed the spot where Devon's heart pounded inside his chest and let the insistent waves of exhaustion carry him off.

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Scott was contentedly doing his stalker routine, sitting on the edge of the bed while Devon snuffled and snorted himself awake. He was definitely more worse for wear than most mornings; dark shadows underlining his puffy still-unopened eyes, hair sticking up everywhere as if it had been in a fight with a bottle of gel—or maybe a tube of lube—and definitely lost. Scott suppressed a chuckle when one red-rimmed brown eye managed to crack open and gaze painfully at him.

"Good morning, Sunshine." Sometimes his mother's annoying clichés did the job, especially when he was *trying* to

annoy or tease. "Want me to open the blinds a little? Let in some real sunshine?"

"Fuck no," Devon growled. "Feels like someone was using my skull for sparring practice."

"Ah, poor baby. Want me to cook up some greasy eggs and bacon? I hear that's like the hair of the dog for badly beaten skulls."

"I never knew you were such a vindictive bitch." Scott's laughter filled the room while Devon grunted and groaned himself into a sitting position. "Wasn't on my best behavior, huh?"

Devon's little boy smirk rocked Scott from the inside out. "You were fine. Looked like you'd been having some fun."

"Did you take advantage of me in my fragile condition? I mean besides trying to tie my hands and sentence me to death by rubbing." Devon grinned more before reaching out and pulling Scott to him, his strong arms wrapping Scott in a warm, fuzzy embrace. Scott swooned when Devon tucked his nose into the nape of his neck, sniffing and pressing gentle kisses against his skin. If Scott had been a cat he would have surely purred.

"I did! You're gonna be walking funny all day and I think you enjoyed the torture as much as I did."

Devon snickered, warm breath skittering across Scott's skin, traveling full force to all the nerves in his body. "Oh yeah. The sticky come pulling my belly hairs tells me so. Does that mean you don't want me to jump you?"

"I doubt you even have the energy for that."

Devon sighed while Scott's rippled with goosebumps again. "You're probably right. How about a little groping in the shower?"

There was groping—more than a little—and kissing and holding. As far as Scott was concerned, the shower had only added extra perfection to an already perfect start to the day. He liked to think dual showering had one of two purposes; wild, sweaty, wet, face-smashed-against-the-tiles sex or calm, just-wanna-touch-and-hold-you intimacy. That morning was the latter, and after Scott's revelation of the night before, it was

exactly what he needed to reaffirm his feelings. He was in love with Devon. He loved Devon. *Wow.*

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"Oh fuck! My clothes smell like ass," Devon called out from the bedroom.

Scott paused in his coffee-making-tea-brewing ritual. "In a good or bad way?"

"Is there good way? I'm gonna throw them in the wash. You got something I can wear, babe?"

Goosebumps scurried over Scott's skin. *Babe.* "Try the back of my closet, and just for the record, I like the smell of your butt."

Scott hid his grin behind his hand when Devon entered the kitchen. He'd found an ancient pair of Scott's sweats and a threadbare hoodie which couldn't be done up over Devon's sexy chest. Scott had been thirty-five pounds heavier back then, but hadn't thrown out the reminders of his chubbiness. The pants were too short on Devon, and the hoodie barely held together over the bulging mass of his arms. Devon himself was a little less swaggery and a lot more subdued, but gorgeous nonetheless.

"That's good to know but I'm thinking you don't want me spreading my assy goodness around town?"

It was a loaded question to Scott, sounding simple but oh so not the case. It brought images of a wolf staking its claim by covering its mate in its scent, except that was a little off from the true analogy. *And, fuck no*, he didn't want anyone else sniffing around his man. *His man.* Holy crap. Was it time to panic?

"Are you actually making a fruit salad?"

"Would you rather have greasy eggs and bacon?" Devon slipped behind Scott, pressing him against the counter. "Watch yourself. I'm wielding a very sharp knife."

Devon's purr vibrated over the bare skin of Scott's neck. Damn, Scott loved it when he made that noise. "And you wield

it very well, especially how perfectly identical you make each piece."

"Don't go there. I saved your drunk ass last night and now you're making fun of me? I'm still holding the knife, you know."

Soft kisses at the base of his skull forced Scott to stand up a little straighter, tilt his head a little to the left in silent encouragement.

"I'm not making fun. I think it's cute--"

"It's anything but cute," Scott said, suppressing the sigh of utter contentment so close to the tip of his tongue it burned. "I'm assuming you didn't ride your bike here last night?"

Devon stole a piece of melon from the cutting board, his mouth full when he replied, "Nope. I was a responsible drunk."

"And a very sappy one." Scott slapped Devon's fingers, shoving him back a bit while he reached for the big blue bowl in the cupboard. "Any particular reason for the alcohol indulgence?"

Scott cringed and his body cooled when Devon stepped away, moving to the table and straddling one of the kitchen chairs. His posture had gone from teasing to defeated in a matter of seconds.

"Devon? What's wrong?" Scott placed the knife on the cutting board, wiped his hands on a towel, and slipped to Devon's side.

"One of my buddies' wife is sick. They think she doesn't have much time left. He needed to blow off some steam."

"I'm sorry." Scott swept his hand up and down Devon's strong back. "Anything I can do?" It was a stupid question, but Scott had no idea what else to say. He'd been fortunate so far in not having to deal with anything so tragic and close before, but he wished he could find the words to comfort Devon.

"Naw. He's just trying to keep things normal and sane for his kids. That's what Beth wants so we're all doing our part to support and take care of him. But thanks."

Scott nodded, leaning down to kiss the top of Devon's wet head, his lips lingering for a long moment. "How about fruit salad and tea in bed?"

"And dessert?" Devon's eyes twinkled up at Scott. "Can't forget the dessert."

"How could I with you around?" Scott chuckled before moving back to the counter. "Did you want me to take you to get your bike now or just before you head home?"

"It's already at home."

Scott turned to gaze at Devon. "You got drunk at home then came over here at two in the morning?"

Devon shrugged. "It was Saturday, that's our night and Sunday's our day, right?"

Shell shocked, Scott spun away from Devon again, some excuse about finishing the salad slipping easily off his tongue. Had Devon just said *they* had a special day? Two days in fact? His heart hammered a little louder in his chest, snakes crawling under the surface of his skin. He sucked in a calming breath and tried to keep the shaky anxiety from his voice. "Yeah, I guess. You don't need to take a taxi though, I can drive you home."

"Naw. You have your Sunday routine. You need to relax. Tax season's a bitch, right?"

Something toxic skittered across Scott's brain, scattering the already festering bubbles of panic lodged in his head. "Are you married, Devon?"

The look that crossed Devon's face would have been comical had the circumstances not been so dire to Scott. "What?"

"This has nothing to do with tax season and you know it. You're hiding something and the logical conclusion is a wife. Did you have a fight with her last night so you came running to me?"

Scott was out of control. All the suspicions he'd been having, all the insecurities about Devon's mysterious disappearances and penchant to hide out at Scott's house moving forefront and smacking him in the face...and the heart.

"Logical, huh?"

"Just answer the question. Are you married?" Scott's fingers dug uncomfortably into his hips, the small divots of pain keeping him present and in the moment. It was a trick he'd

picked up in a therapy group; it didn't always work, but on the odd occasion it did.

"Fuck no! And I don't have another lover either in case that's your next question."

Scott ignored Devon's tense posture, the defensive cock of his head, the sad confusion in his eyes. Desperation could be camouflaged by confusion quite easily and there was no way in hell he was going to get sucked in by Devon's distractions. It was time for the truth.

"Then why do you refuse to be seen with me?"

"I fucking don't. We went to the club *and* I went to the market with you. What are doing, Scott? Why are you accusing me—"

"You stayed in the car."

"What?"

Scott huffed out a breath, the air in the kitchen suddenly too close, the room too warm. "At the market... you stayed in the car."

"I'd had a long night. I was tired. You said you were going to be quick."

"Not too tired to fuck me in the kitchen before we even got the groceries unpacked."

Devon reached out a hand to touch Scott. Scott pulled away. "Come on, babe. Don't be like that."

"Like what? You know everything about me but we can't seem to step foot outside the house without you having a freak out."

"It was only once and I told you what happened."

"Mistaken identity. Blah, blah, blah. How do I know he wasn't just another fuck buddy? Maybe whatever the fuck he called you is one of your aliases."

"I'm not fucking him. I have never fucked him. And I don't think of you as just another fuck buddy. Can't you just leave it alone? We're having a great time and I really like you."

"Not enough to be seen with me." Scott flinched back when Devon slammed his fist on the counter.

"Oh fuck me! Give it a rest. I don't know everything about you, and your bullshit martyr act is getting old."

"My what? I'm just thinking logically." *And you really wouldn't want to know all the shit I deal with day to day, how unbalanced I really am, how much of a freak my obsessions and compulsions make me. The panic attacks that paralyze me no reason at all. You don't want to know, Devon, and I'm definitely not going to let you find out.*

"Maybe you should think with your heart for a change and shove your logic up your ass. I said I really liked you, Scott. Doesn't that even register in your *logic*?"

With emotion threatening to overwhelm his composure and his eyes stinging with unshed tears, Scott turned away from Devon. "I think you should go."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean... I'm not trying to hurt—"

"There's only room for so many selfish, narcissistic people in my life."

"Selfish? Narcissistic?"

"...And my mother has all those spots tied up."

"Can't you just see past all the bad shit you think about yourself and believe me? Give me a little more time to—"

"You need to go."

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The slamming of the front door cued the release of Scott's pent-up emotions, his mind and heart exploding in a gush of sobs and a crash of knees hitting the floor. The panic attack wrapped itself around him, tightening his chest, churning his stomach, sending a flurry of anxiety and fear to his brain. He knew what was happening, even knew the mechanics involved in how to make it subside, but like so many times in the past, he was paralyzed to control or rein himself in.

He ducked his head to his chest, hands flat against the cool surface of the kitchen tiles, tiny droplets of sweat slithering from his brow to his cheeks before mixing with the salty tears that dripped over his lips and into his mouth. He didn't usually



cry, prided himself on that very fact despite all the fucked-up things that made up the world of Scott Weston and the lack of support in his life. Those fucked-up things were hearty reasons why he never let anyone get close, never let anyone crawl past all the boundaries and walls of steel he'd built up over the years.

Until now.

Now he'd let Devon do exactly what he'd always protected himself from—he'd let Devon get inside his heart, let him become something that mattered to Scott.

Raising his head, his mind reeling with dizziness and his stomach threatening to empty, he reached under the kitchen sink for a brown paper bag, the ones he used to cart his middle class lunch to his middle class job every day. He sat back on his heels, breath coming in short raspy pulls from his overwhelmed lungs, before sealing the bag around his lips and struggling to concentrate on his breathing.

*"One M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i. Two M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i. Three M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i..."*

How ironic was it that he was kneeling on his kitchen floor counting Mississippis after he'd just thrown out the only man who'd ever made him feel wanted and who just happened to be from Mississippi? Damn ironic is what it was. A bubble of choked emotion erupted from his throat, the bag fluttering to the floor as his lungs screamed for more air and he succumbed to a fit of hysterical laughter. A wave of thoughts echoing past experience settled in his head, reminding him there would be less damage if he prepared and accepted the reality of the panic attack's wrath. Logical. He liked logical.

He let his body slip the rest of the way to the floor, the cold surface adding to the buzzing of his nerves and the twitching of his skin while he continued to laugh uncontrollably. He guessed it was better than crying, but he was almost certain once he regained consciousness he'd remember in painful detail all the fears and insecurities that had put him on the floor in the first place.

That's the way it always was. He could never catch a break.

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The last place Scott wanted to be after a freaking sixty-hour work week was a goddamn rock and roll concert, and if the sounds thumping against the walls of the arena were any indication, his ears would be bleeding before the night was over. Why he had ever promised his sister he'd take his fourteen-year-old nephew to such a thing was beyond his comprehension. Hell, he didn't understand why she let him listen to that crap in the first place and it had been his own big mouth that got him into trouble in the first place... but still.

It wouldn't have been so bad if the show hadn't sold out so fast and his nephew hadn't been so damn crushed when he didn't get tickets. But Eddie was the only nephew he had—really more like a son to Scott—plus the kid still didn't mind hanging out in public with him, unlike other so-called grown-ups Scott was definitely not thinking about.

*"Oh, yeah, I do the taxes for the security firm that does the shows. And most of the security guys, too. Saved them a boatload of money over the years. They always say just give them a call if I need tickets for anything."*

Way to go Scott. Good job, babe. Oh fuck, he missed Devon so much.

Two weeks had passed since their break-up, and according to Scott's loving sister, he was just being a big old bitch about the whole thing. But how was it possible to *not* be a bitch about a fight that hadn't even been a fight at all, just a stupid misunderstanding. And was telling someone they were selfish and maybe they should leave even be called a misunderstanding? Oh hell, the whole thing had been Scott's fault, him and his damn insecurities and questions. If he had just accepted that Devon had nothing to hide and actually liked spending time alone with him, he wouldn't have driven him away on what could have been another perfect Sunday in their relationship.

His mother would say no use crying over spilled milk or

some other stupid saying she found applicable to the situation, but fuck it, Devon wasn't just spilled milk or any other toppled-over beverage. And it certainly wasn't a sign from God that Scott should find a nice girl and settle down. Those ideas and many others were the reasons Scott hadn't told his holier-than-thou mother a thing about Devon or their break-up. He'd also sworn his sister to secrecy by threat of death which in turn was the main reason he'd agreed to take Eddie to the concert when he'd rather be home sulking and rearranging his sock drawer.

After being physically violated—searched by rough heathens—Scott grabbed Eddie by the shoulder of his black leather jacket (and why on earth did a fourteen year old need a leather jacket?) before dragging him through the crowd. The atmosphere was like a rowdy high school party and the show hadn't even started yet. It reminded Scott of the metal heads he'd gone to school with, the ones who teased and tormented him ruthlessly because he didn't share their hobby of fist-pumping, ripped jeans and t-shirts, and loud obnoxious music. Of dear God, what had he gotten himself into?

"S-man." Eddie had been calling Scott by that nickname since he was little. There had never been any rhyme or reason to it but Eddie still used it and Scott still liked it. "The pit is this way."

*The pit?* No way in hell were they going into a sweaty, dangerous pit of sweaty dangerous men—no way, no how. Scott groaned when Eddie shot him his best sad puppy look complete with sad puppy eyes and a sad puppy drooping mouth.

"I'm sorry, Eddie. I just can't go in there. It's too much for me. Can't we find some seats instead?"

Eddie's sweet demeanor deflated even more. Scott wanted to crawl into the ground, but since that wasn't an option, so he searched his brain for a solution.

"Just stay here for a second," he said. "Don't. Move."

Scott was gone no more than three minutes, a bigger-than-life man following behind him when he returned. "Eddie, this is Marshall. He works security for the band."

His nephew shook the big man's hand and Scott noticed how the look of awe as Eddie took in Marshall's long hair, leather vest, and tattooed arms. "Hey," Eddie said. "Cool tats."

"Thanks."

Scott smirked and turned his attention to Eddie again. "Marshall has a way for you to stand in the back of the pit while I sit and still keep my eye on you."

"The back..." Eddie whined.

Scott shrugged, amazed at his ability to keep his cool and negotiate with a teenager when all he wanted to do was get the fuck out. "Take it or leave it. That's my final offer."

"I can take him closer on my break," Marshall offered.

"Um..."

"No one's gonna mess with me, Scott. Besides, I owe you for getting me that awesome refund last year. I'll take him around to the side of the stage then bring him back again. Everyone's happy."

Scott wasn't happy at all, but it was a compromise he could live with. Plus Eddie looked like he was going to jump out of his skin with excitement.

"Please, S-man."

"Maybe I can even get him in to meet the band after the show."

Scott moaned while Eddie did a strange little dance.

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Eddie was over-the-top excited when the band took the stage. Scott looked at his watch, surprised the show had actually started at the scheduled time. He was quickly informed by both Marshall and Eddie that Broken Evolution was only the first of two opening bands before the big guns took the stage.

"Dammit, I should have brought earplugs," Scott said under his breath.

Marshall must have had bionic hearing because he whipped out a pre-packaged pair on the spot. "I always carry extras."

Scott thanked him before settling back in his seat. He was

pleased to see the seats around him were empty, and therefore he wouldn't have to dodge any fist-pumping, pig-squealing fans jumping around near him. He was displeased to find out the fans he hoped hadn't shown up at all, did show up after the two opening bands. And unfortunately, they seemed pumped and ready to go.

The bass pumped out of the numerous huge speakers hard and strong before the main attraction took the stage, the sound vibrating through Scott's body and reminding him uncomfortably of a bad panic attack. He'd brought his anti-anxiety medication, but since it often made him sleepy, he hoped he wouldn't have to use it.

Eddie stood at the back of the pit, only a few stray t-shirt-wearing fans standing nearby. His little fist shot up and down in the air, head bopping back and forth, knees bending as he lifted his body in time to the thumping. He looked happier than a pig in shit and Scott silently praised himself for going so far out of his comfort zone in order to make his nephew so happy.

He switched his gaze to the stage, watching a curly-haired man seat himself behind the massive set of drums. Then two guitarists appeared, arms raised over their heads, fist pumping right along with the crowd. Had the music not been so atrocious, and well, noisy, and the crowd not so overbearing and dirty-looking, Scott might have actually enjoyed the outing. But all he wanted was for it to be over so he could go home and hermit himself away for the weekend.

It was Friday, and Friday would be followed by Saturday, and then depressingly by Sunday—the worst day of the week. Scott had been so busy during the week he'd been able to clear Devon from his head, but the weekends were always a very different story. He'd started having smaller, shorter panic attacks—mini anxiety attacks according to his doctor—that came and went in a flash, but left him almost as wrung out and exhausted as the full-blown ones he'd suffered from since he was a teenager. He hadn't passed out since the incident with Devon and for that he was thankful, but the greater number of smaller attacks left him listless and depressed. There was no

winning and Scott chastised himself over and over for the display he'd made that last day with Devon. He still had the clothes Devon had left there, and he had no intention of giving them back—if they even ever crossed paths again, which he was fairly certain would never happen.

The crowd's increased roar brought him back from his thoughts, the lights dimming even more and the spotlights on the stage going out. Scott saw the vague outline of a man walk toward the front of the stage, both hands wrapping around the mic before he lowered his head. An eerie blue light began to glow at his feet, the illumination moving up the legs of his tight jeans, past a belt buckle that Scott thought resembled a skull and finally up the man's torso to finally land on his head. He was still looking down, his mass of wavy hair beginning to shake from side to side while his tattooed, muscled arms gripped the mic and held it up high in the air. One loud thump from the drums and the whole venue lit up, followed by a simultaneous scream from the singer and the crowd echoing through the building. Scott found himself inching closer and closer to the edge of his seat, the building adrenaline and excitement carrying him along for the ride. Whoever the guy on stage was, he knew how to make an entrance.

"Bwahhhhh," the man screamed when he finally lifted his head, his face tense and hard as he bellowed again.

Scott's whole body went rigid, tiny beads of sweat forming on his hairline, his hands fisting the denim covering his legs. *It couldn't be. There was no way in hell it could be...*

It was Devon. All six goddamn feet of tattooed, muscled beauty caterwauling and howling from the stage. His shirt and jeans were skin-tight, leaving absolutely nothing to the imagination: strong chest, defined nipple rings, outline of his half-hard cock dressed to the right—flaunting himself in front of thousands of people obviously turned Devon on. Scott was both disgusted and intrigued at the same time, his eyes seeking out the little nuances and imperfections of Devon's body that he knew were there under the painted-on clothes, as if he was looking for further proof the man on stage was exactly who he

was.

This was Devon's secret? This strange world of fist-pumping, head-banging misfits screaming and grunting words Scott couldn't even understand—if they were words at all. *This* was what Devon couldn't share with Scott? Not a wife or lover or even a life of crime—all things that had crossed Scott's mind at one time or another. As much as Devon's real life dispelled those particular accusations, it also enhanced other ones, forcing Scott to realize he'd been right all along.

Devon *had* been ashamed to be seen with him—Scott's accountant haircut and boring, obsessive rituals obviously too embarrassing to Devon unless it came to fucking Scott in the privacy of Scott's own home. Sliding to the back of his chair, Scott shoved the earplugs further into his ears, his only need at that very moment to shut out Devon's words, Devon's voice... Devon... Devon... Devon.

"He's awesome, right?" Marshall managed to yell the exact thing Scott didn't want to hear. "Really nice guy. He's good with his fans, too, so it shouldn't be a problem taking Eddie back to meet him after the show."

"No!" Scott's voice shot from his throat before he had time to think. "That's not necessary. Eddie's just glad to be here. Maybe next time." He faked a half-smile before turning his head back to the rat on stage.

"Might be his last chance to meet the guys, Scott. I hear they're tentatively retiring after the next couple of shows. Family stuff I think."

"That's too bad but I'm sure Eddie's not that big a fan."

"Could have fooled me," Marshall said, dipping his head to the side where Eddie stood not three feet away, eyes closed, body moving in time to the music—in perfect unison to Devon's body.

It would make Scott very uncomfortable to see Devon, but at the same time, it would also cause Devon some discomfort as well. And though Scott wasn't generally a vindictive man, putting it in that light made it easier on his head and heart. It was far easier to analyze the situation that way than to give in

to the pain he knew would surface later when his adrenaline had diminished.

"Okay," he said as Marshall turned back to him. "That would be great... for Eddie I mean."

"Cool."

Scott wasn't sure how cool it would actually be and to be perfectly honest, he was hoping Devon felt like he was the one on the hotseat when Scott walked into the room.

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After surviving the rest of the show plus two encores, Scott was as tense as he could ever remembered being. His palms were sweaty, the pits of his t-shirt soaked through despite the air-conditioned venue being comfortably cool, and he was seriously considering running to the bathroom to throw up. He hadn't been able to keep his eyes off Devon; working the stage, beautiful and confident, and holding the crowd in the palms of his hands. It was so hard for Scott to believe the screaming, jumping, cursing man on the stage was the same one who drank lemongrass tea, helped Scott with his chores, and whose favorite spot was curling up on the sun porch with Scott.

His streaming musings were interrupted by the impact of his nephew's body hit him square in the chest. Eddie's face was pulled hard in a smile so wide Scott feared it would crack. His little body shook with excitement as he wrapped Scott in a tight embrace. It was so damn hard to be bitter when someone else was bursting with happiness and though Scott knew he should be the adult in the situation, he had to hold on to a little bitter.

Once they'd waited for the crowd to thin out and Scott had endured Eddie's non-stop banter about the band and the singer and "oh-my-God wasn't he the coolest thing in the entire world," they followed Marshall to the back of the venue. Scott kept a firm grip on Eddie's jacket again, not for one second believing one of these drug-addled fans wouldn't grab his nephew and turn him into some equally drug-addled boy whore. He'd taken his anti-anxiety meds and sometimes instead of the drowsiness, he experienced paranoia, which was no doubt the cause of his over-zealous imagination. Or was it?



Eddie was trying very hard to be grown-up about meeting the band, but Scott could see right through it, even in his current state of suspicion.

"You really like these guys, huh?" he said loudly, to be heard above the still-noisy crowd.

"They're so awesome. I can't believe I'm going to meet Devastation. My friends are gonna flip."

Scott moved in closer to Eddie, wrapping an arm around his thin shoulders and helping to steer him through the maze of hallways and people. "Devastation?"

"The lead singer," Eddie said with a snort.

Ah, things were becoming clearer. "Does he have a last name?"

Eddie shrugged and stepped away from Scott to catch up with Marshall. "Do you think he'll give me an autograph or maybe a picture? That would be fucking—"

"Eddie!"

"Sorry."

"I'm sure he'll let you have both," Marshall said. "He's a super nice guy. Always catering to the kids at the show with autographs or pictures."

"Like a pedophile?" The words were out before Scott could consult with his brain.

Marshall stopped short, and Scott barely missing crashing into the back of him. "What?"

Scott smiled. "Nothing. That's not the word I meant to use. What I meant to ask is if *Devastation* was a pedagogist. You know, like a teacher."

Marshall and Eddie shook their heads and went back to walking. Scott huffed out a breath of relief. Goddammit, what was wrong with him? When they reached the backstage area it was a fluster of activity; people loading equipment, people with clipboards, people standing around talking to what looked to be members of the other bands. Scott didn't see Devon... *Devastation* anywhere, but why would he? He was probably holed up in his personal dressing room with some fist-pumping fans kissing his feet or other more private body parts. The more

Scott thought about it, the angrier he got. Devon had used him, had lied to him and worst of all, had made Scott feel guilty about his suspicions. Devon couldn't move much lower in Scott's mind.

"Scott? Are you coming, man?"

Dammit, he needed to stop stepping out of reality. "Yeah, of course."

Marshall knocked on a very non-descript door, certainly not the door of a *rock and roll superstar*, though Scott wasn't sure if what Devon actually did was rock and roll or some other kind of annoying music. It didn't really matter. He just wanted to get the confrontation over so he could go home and have his breakdown in private.

"Come in!" The voice was definitely Devon's and Scott's blood pressure suddenly spiked. He held back when Marshall and Eddie entered the room, hiding beside the doorframe. He told himself he was prepared to see Devon again, but even the sound of his voice sent tingles up and down his arms.

Eddie's voice broke through his anxiety. "Uncle Scott! S-man! Aren't you coming in?" Then he was pulling Scott into the room, and the scent of musk and sweat assaulted and thrilled his nostrils. But it was the underlying fragrance that tickled the inside of his nose, the little hints of Devon scattered about in the air. Scott needed to get a grip.

He squared his shoulders and unslouched his body despite the *flight* part of the fight or flight equation firmly stamping its feet. *Oh-my-fucking-God-what-am-I-doing*. He needed to get back the anger he'd felt when he'd seen Devon up on the stage, the rage that he'd been betrayed over something as silly as his boyfriend being a rockstar or scream star or whatever the fuck he was. Unfortunately, all he was feeling was nervous apprehension and fear that Devon would just laugh in his face—*ha, ha, joke's on you, fucker*—and Scott would return home to melt into a puddle of rejection and embarrassment.

A hand on his arm dragged him inside, the force sending him sprawling into the back of Eddie. Who knew the kid was so strong? He kept his head ducked down, reaching for the zipper-

pull half-way down his jacket and slowly pulling it up to his neck. It was a ruse to keep from falling immediately into Devon's gaze; lame but hopefully it would work.

Eddie's fingers still wrapped around Scott's forearm and he tugged a little harder as he spoke. "Devastation, this is my uncle Scott. He's not a fan but he brought me here and he's pretty cool."

Scott looked up into shocked brown eyes, the expression on Devon's face closer to pain than "*ha, ha, joke's on you, fucker.*" He quickly recovered, one corner of his mouth curling up in that half-smile Scott used to love so much—loved only two short weeks ago. The inconsistency of having only one dimple glowing back at Scott told him the smile wasn't real and Devon's original reaction was still coursing through him.

Devon reached out his hand and Scott, being the bigger man, smiled—using both sides of his mouth—before taking Devon's hand in a slow, hard shake. "Nice to meet you, *Devastation*. Eddie is apparently a big fan." He couldn't help the little sneer that accompanied Devon's new name or the inflection of sarcasm that wrapped around the word. "Thanks for meeting with us."

"No problem. I try to keep in touch with my fans."

"I'll bet you do," Scott said, smile still firmly stamped on his lips. "Interesting... music you guys play."

"Thanks. Not your thing I take it?"

Scott snorted, hoping his outside demeanor was smoother and less flaily than his inside one. "I'm more of a jazz guy myself."

"S-man listens to really boring stuff," Eddie said. "Do you think I could get a picture with you, Devastation?"

"Please call me Dev, and of course, Eddie. Do you have cell phone we can use?"

"My mom wouldn't let me bring mine but we can use S-man's, right?"

Scott nodded, all business and happiness rolled into one fake ball of God-I-want-to-throw-up. "Sure. You guys arrange yourselves and I'll take it.

He watched his nephew fawn over his former boyfriend/lover/fuckbuddy, ignoring the way Devon's t-shirt hugged his body, the slim, fitted cut of his jeans. Devon's hair was wet and he'd changed out of his stage clothes, but the unmistakable scent of his shampoo, his soap and his own personal sweat still hung precariously in the air. Scott snuck a quick whiff, his mouth salivating, eyes blurring momentarily as the fragrance buzzed and licked its way through his body. He needed a cold shower, but even the thought of his bathroom at home brought dirty images of *Devon in his shower* doing delightfully dirty things to him.

"Okay, we're ready." Eddie's voice floated around Scott's thoughts. "Is this okay?"

Devon had his arm around Eddie, the boy's face seemingly about to crack from the huge grin he had going on. His body was tucked into Devon's, blond head only reaching Devon's chest. "It's good."

Fishing his cell phone out of his pocket, Scott lined up the shot, the thought of having a picture of Devon saved on his phone niggling at his brain a little. He'd never taken a picture of Devon before, despite their four months together *and* the temptation on those mornings when he'd been sleeping so adorably. The flash went off and he clicked the picture to check it while Eddie appeared at his side.

"It's too far away. Can't you zoom or something?"

"Just move in closer," Devon suggested, cocky-assed smirk and double dimples glaring Scott in the face. "I don't bite."

Scott knew for a fact he did. "Sure. Get back over there, Eddie."

He moved a few steps forward, centering the pair in the little screen. He noticed Devon had the tell-tale smudges of eyeliner still framing his eyes, something Scott had never noticed when he'd come to his place. He must have been sure to scrub off all the evidence before he landed his lying ass on Scott's doorstep. One click and the picture was done, Eddie approving the shot, and then moving to get Devon's autograph on the inside of what Scott could see was a fake leather jacket.

“Hey, Marshall,” Devon said. “Why don’t you take Eddie to meet the rest of the guys?”

“Really?” Eddie gasped while Scott groaned inside—he hoped it was only internally.

“Sure. They hate it when I get all the attention. Your uncle can hang with me while you’re gone. Marshall will give you the tour.” Devon grinned from ear to ear, both dimples showing but the smile not reaching his eyes. Scott was taken aback by the suggestion and the look on Devon’s face. If it was a challenge, he was ready as hell to meet it.

“You don’t wanna meet the other guys, S-man?” Eddie asked, ever the polite child Scott knew he would soon grow out of.

“I’m okay. Marshall mentioned that *Devastation* needed some advice on his taxes. I’ll see you in a bit.”

Eddie nodded before following Marshall out the door. They shut it behind them and the room was instantly stony silent, the tension palpable like a thick invisible fog threatening to choke them both, or at least Scott. He watched, arms crossed over his chest, feet shoulder width apart, head held high as Devon sat forward in his chair.

“How’ve you been?”

Scott’s mouth dropped open. “That’s all you have to say to me? How’ve I been?”

Devon scoffed. “It’s called a conversation starter. I was trying to be polite.”

“I think you blew polite the fuck up when you lied to me for four months.”

“I didn’t lie. I omitted. They aren’t the same thing.”

Scott was at a loss for words, something unusual and foreign to him especially when he was so mad he could spit. “Omitted? What the fuck, Devon? Oh sorry. I mean *Devastation*.”

“Devon’s my real name.”

“Like I care.” Scott’s flicked his head to the side.

Devon stood up, all freshly-showered, hotter than fuck lying-sack-of-shit rockstar. Scott forced himself not to look,

dipped his head to examine his shoes when Devon came closer. He flinched away when a warm hand settled on his arm and a finger lifted his chin. He looked up into Devon's eyes.

"I'm sorry. I would have... I was going to tell you."

Scott stepped back, snapping his arm away and moving to the other side of the room. "When? After you finished your world tour and needed a place to hide again? Or maybe you have another lover stashed away for those times? Aren't rockstars supposed to be like sailors? A lover in every port?"

"I don't have another lover. I already told you that."

"That's not much of a comfort considering you've been so full of shit about everything else."

"Why did you come backstage if you didn't want to see me?" The look on Devon's face was pure despair, even his body language admitting defeat in some strange way. His whole demeanor sent tiny ripples of sadness to Scott's heart, but he wouldn't allow that to happen. He was thinking with his head from now on, not that overworked muscle in his chest that got him into trouble and definitely not the lusty one in his pants.

"Eddie wanted to meet you and I wanted to see for myself how much you didn't matter to me anymore."

Devon leaned his back against the wall, head cocked in Scott's direction. "I don't believe that."

Scott snorted. "Doesn't matter what you believe, does it? I believed you love... liked me and look how that turned out."

"I do like you, and the word you almost said? I agree with that one, too."

"Fuck you, Devon!" Scott moved closer, words and spit smacking Devon in the face. "You can't say that to me just because you've been caught in your dirty lies."

"I'm saying it because it's true."

"What's true? You like me? You *loooove* me? You cheated on me with a whole goddamn army of fans?"

Devon shook his head, the tiny muscle in his jaw twitching ever-so-slightly. "I don't sleep with my fans."

"I call bullshit to that too. I saw you on the stage. You were like a big horny sack of cock waiting to breed." *And I wanted you*

*all for myself.*

"It's an act, Scott. I'm an entertainer, that's what I do."

"How many did you fuck when you weren't hanging out at my house? One a night? Two? Did you have one before you came to my bed or was that even a little too much for the great rockstar to handle?" Scott knew he was out of control but he was helpless to stop himself. He was hurt and sad and frustrated and teetering on the edge of anxiety.

Devon stepped backward, both sides of his jaw twitching, turning his mouth into a demonic smile. "You know what? You're just like all the others. You find out *what* I am and *the who* doesn't matter anymore. That really fucking hurts."

Scott wasn't done. Squaring his shoulders and pursing his lips, he stalked Devon across the room. "What hurts? That I crashed your little party of debauchery or that I'm not falling at your feet begging to sleep with you like all the rest of your harem?"

Devon's jaw clicked and his eyes narrowed. "I haven't slept with anyone else in over four months. I already told you that."

Scott stopped his pursuit. "You said I was just like all the others... that means there are others."

Devon gazed into Scott's eyes. "In the past, yeah. Men who found out what I did for a living and either judged me for it or expected more from me because of it."

"I never wanted more. I just wanted you... the real you."

"Then why can't you believe the real me is the one you had... the one you still have?"

Scott couldn't help but snort. Devon was smooth, so smooth Scott almost believed what he was saying. But that wasn't the point of the conversation. Devon had lied about his life, about everything outside of his world with Scott. Believing anything that came out of Devon's mouth would only bite Scott in the ass later, would only shatter his heart again. That couldn't happen. Scott couldn't let it happen.

He shook his head, more to clear his rambling thoughts than to disagree with anything. His heart thumped so loudly in his ears he wanted to scream for it to shut the fuck up. "The only

thing we had in common was sex and Sundays, Devon. I'm over it and you should be too. I cannot even imagine living the life of a rockstar or more precisely, being the one waiting at home."

"Because it's only *logical* to believe all musicians whore around?" Devon's jaw was twitching again and Scott had to look away from the tense gaze in his eyes.

"If the shoe fits."

Devon slammed his fist on the edge of the table. "Then fuck you, Scott!"

"Keep your voice down. Eddie might here."

"You think I'm rude, crude and lewd anyhow so why would you expect me to give a crap about what some kid hears? Here's the truth Scott... maybe you wanna make a list or something so you don't forget." *Dirty pool, Devon. That really hurt.* "I'm a twenty-seven-year-old, gay, *and out* singer in a band that I love. I'm in the spotlight, I've sold a few records, and I stomp around the stage screaming my fucking heart out but that does not make me a slut. I have... had real feelings for you but this is exactly what I was afraid would happen."

"Feelings? You're going to talk to me about feelings—now?" Scott did not want to talk about feelings with Devon. Not now, not ever. *Have to close the door to my heart. It's all too much.*

"Oh fuck me. You're right. Whores don't have feelings for other people, just hard-ons and orgasms."

"Now you're just being crass. You know that's not what I meant."

"You know what? I'm starting to think you didn't mean a lot of things you said to me, Scott. Maybe you're not as honest as you make yourself out to be either. I apologized and told you I cared for you but that's obviously not enough." Devon's eyes were wild, his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides. If Scott didn't know better he might have been afraid. *But I don't know him.*

"Dev—"

"I have a fan meet and greet to go to. Tell Eddie it was cool to meet him and since you're such a logical guy, I'm sure you can find your way out. Goodbye, Scott."



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The next couple of weeks dragged for Scott; his time was still consumed by work, but his thoughts were strictly on Devon. Being left alone in the dressing room had been a revelation for him, one that came too late and one that would never see fruition. Devon had said goodbye to him and it had sounded more like an honest to goodness goodbye than a *see you around or catch ya later*.

Scott had fucked up—bad. The way he'd treated Devon was shameful and he was embarrassed for not listening to what Devon had had to say. He hadn't given Devon a chance to explain his deception, just stepped right into wallowing over his own pain and heartbreak. His heart still ached like something physical had been removed from inside him, something critical he needed to function in life. To put it bluntly and more than a little needy—he missed Devon with every cell in his body.

Devon's scent still haunted Scott's bedroom, his kitchen, his living room. The jeans and t-shirt he'd last worn to Scott's house were folded and waiting for some unknown messenger to pick them up. But the most obvious ghost to remain was the one who huddled lazily and contentedly on the settee on the sun porch. The apparition never seemed to leave, and it was the hardest one for Scott to give up. He didn't want to give it up because it represented the most important part of Devon that Scott had lost; the part Scott looked forward to spending Sundays with, the relaxed, grinning, quick-to-cuddle part that made Scott's whole week bearable.

Scott had debated his part in the whole deceptive situation and he'd concluded in his own logical way that his hands weren't clean by any means. He'd had many opportunities to push Devon's obvious issue with leaving Scott's house a little further, but instead chose to stay contentedly blind. Hell, he'd never considered going to Devon's place, didn't know where Devon lived, had never even asked Devon what he did for work since that would have opened the conversation up for

Devon to scoff at Scott's mundane career. He'd also concluded it was time to fess up to his part of the misunderstanding and to the feelings threatening to strangle him with sadness. Devon had become more than a lover; he'd become the best friend Scott had ever had so the loss was twofold for him.

He needed to tell Devon he wanted him back, even if it was only a small part of him. Friend. Lover. Whatever Devon would agree on. He wondered if it was possible to swallow one's pride and admit what an asshole they'd been in a situation that was already impossibly screwed-up, a situation where one party had seemingly said their last farewell. Regardless of his apprehension, regardless of the writhing fear that snaked through his body, he was going to find out.

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Marshall met him at the side door of the same building Scott had last seen Devon perform, where the dreaded confrontation had taken place. He'd used the ruse of taxes to get the kind security guard to usher him inside after the show had finished. There were fewer people milling about, but Scott was still just as nervous. He'd tried to fool his mind into believing it was a blind date but then again, he wasn't exactly the type to involve himself in that sort of thing, so that plan went out the window. It all came down to facing the fears he'd buried over his entire life, or in the least, one very big one involving taking a chance on someone who could very well hurt him again. He wanted Devon back and no one could do it for him.

Scott had been keeping tabs on Smoky Grey—the name had made him chuckle and awww all at the same time—and he knew it was the last show they'd play in a while due to personal reasons. Basically it was Scott's last chance to seek Devon out without turning into a stalker and taking to the Internet to find him. He'd considered bringing Devon's clothes with him, but that would have been admitting defeat before he even went for the win, so he'd left them in their designated, familiar spot.

He took one calming breath before he lifted his hand to knock, noticing at the last second the door was already partially ajar. He snuck a peek inside, not wanting to interrupt if there was some meeting or other going on. It was dim inside but Scott could make out the silhouette of two men embracing—an intimate moment with only a glance.

Scott shifted his body a little further into the doorway, Devon's face becoming recognizable over the shoulder of the long-haired man he was hugging. His eyes were closed, his nose buried in the man's hair. The men's arms were wrapped tight around one another, Devon's right hand fisted in the long hair. Scott watched as Devon kissed the man's forehead, fingers tightening in his hair and then Scott had had enough.

He tore his eyes from the scene playing out, bypassing the urge to rip the two men apart from each other. He turned, black dots in his eyes making it hard to focus on which way he'd come, on which way he had to go to get the hell out of there. When his legs threatened to give way, he grabbed at the concrete walls, but their smooth glossiness gave him no assistance and he landed hard on one knee. One hand shoved into his pocket, the tiny bottle of Ativan rattling against his fingers, at least for a moment before it fell to the floor. Thankfully, there was no tell-tale sign of spilling, no tiny pings of pills scattering everywhere.

"Here, let me help you." The voice was unfamiliar and female, the latter startling Scott more than the sudden appearance of a person at his side. "Do you need one or two?"

Scott managed to croak out "two" before his lungs burned for air and he gave in to the hyperventilating that threatened to make him pass out.

"Swallow or under your tongue?" The question would have made Devon chuckle if he were there and Scott would have chastised him for his dirty mind, but he wasn't there and it was a woman saying it and *oh-my-God, I need to focus*.

"Why don't we get you some place more comfortable until those take affect?"

He shook his head but was already being dragged from the

floor, an arm wrapping around his waist. “I just wanna go home,” he said. “Please take me to the door.”

“You’re Scott, aren’t you?” the still faceless woman asked.

How did she know that? The last thing he wanted was for someone to recognize him and tell Devon he’d been rolling around on the floor outside his dressing room like some goddamn fan in heat. He needed to get out of there. *Someone get me out of here.*

“Dev talks a lot about you, even now after he’s said you dumped him.”

Scott sucked in a breath, blowing it out slowly along with the words, “I didn’t dump him.”

“Does he know you’re here?”

He was starting to feel calmer, his nerves changing from snakes of destruction to worms wiggling sluggishly in mud. He tried to pull away from the tight hold around his waist but was unsuccessful.

“We’ve been trying to find him someone to settle down with for years. He’s never liked the lifestyle. We tease him that he should have gone into business or something boring like that so he’d have the little white picket fence and porch he’s always dreamed of.”

Scott’s emotions rose precariously in his throat. *Porch.* He coughed to clear the lump, ready to tell this woman—whoever she thought she was who knew so much about Devon—that he was fine. A different voice from down the hall made him snap to attention.

“What the fuck happened, Scott?” Marshall’s gruff words made Scott believe there might be a God, at least at that precise moment in time, and he was happy to have his still-reeling body swapped from the woman’s to Marshall’s hold.

“I think he had a panic attack, Marsh. Not sure he got to see Dev either. Don’t let him drive home.” Then she was gone and Scott could finally raise his eyes to the worried ones staring him in the face.

“Do you still want to see Devastation?”

“No! I just... I just need to go home. Please.” Scott sagged

against Marshall, partially for effect but mostly because of exhaustion and a feeling of rejection. The fewer people who saw him and his maiden-in-distress act the better.

"There's a couple of taxis outside or do you want me to drive you? You'll have to wait until my shift is over but I'm almost done."

"No. A taxi's good."

Marshall helped him into the backseat of the cab, getting Scott's address from him, but asking no other questions. Scott loved him for that. Just as he was closing the door, a thought struck Scott.

"Marshall, who was that woman?"

"You mean Charlene? She's Wolfie's wife. Real nice girl, doesn't let any of the boys get out of line. She's been around a lot to give her support to Shadow."

Scott head was beginning to spin again, caused more from the slew of names being thrown at him than the panic attack. "Shadow?"

"Smoky's drummer. His wife just died of cancer last week. That's why the boys are taking some time off. It's been hard."

"I imagine it has been."

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The cab dropped Scott off in front of his house and within five minutes, he was inside and passed out on top of the covers of his bed—shoes and coat still intact. He awoke a few hours later, took another couple of Ativan for good measure, undressed and crawled back in bed. The next day was Sunday and Scott really hoped he'd just sleep the entire day away.

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Exactly one week later a loud knock at the door interrupted Scott from a very boring evening of watching some nature show on television. To be fair, he wasn't really watching, just using it to break the monotony and silence of another Saturday night

with nothing more exciting to do than learn the breeding habits of the Canada goose. He'd considered going out to *The Little Shoppe of Jazz*, but Saturday nights were much more crowded than during the week and he was sure he wouldn't enjoy the music if he had to be shoulder to shoulder with other people. Plus, since he'd taken the week off—the first time in his entire life—due to illness—more like depressed sulking—he didn't feel it was appropriate to leave the house.

The intrusion came as Scott was discovering it was the female goose that did the mate-choosing by effectively stalking her intended victim. They then began their courtship by establishing a bond, became completely monogamous and in love, and lived happily ever after. *How fucking fabulous and easy was that?*

The first thing that came to Scott's mind was "*the Girl Scouts are back with more cookies*" and his brain excitedly did an internal fist-pump. The next, "*but it's a little late for Girl Scouts to be knocking on doors.*" Dammit. Who the hell could it be? If they weren't bringing him more cookies, they could just take a hike anyhow.

He dragged himself off the couch, mindful of his week-long un-showered body, his bed-head hair that had seen a lot of bed recently, and the threadbare pajama pants and t-shirt he hadn't bothered to change out of since the previously Sunday. He was mindful of them, but didn't give a crap at the same time. By the time he reached the door—all of twenty feet or so of stepping over things that did not belong where he was stepping—he was angry at the person on the other side for interrupting his Canada Goose happily ever after and for not bringing him anymore cookies, but mostly for the latter.

He didn't even check the peephole to see who dared to sully his stoop at ten o'clock on a Saturday night, just whipped the door open, a rude comment already formed on his tongue. He ended up stumbling on his carefully put together words instead.

"Who the hell... who the... what the hell... what are you doing here?" Scott's eyes grew wide, his jaw dropping to the

floor when his mind wrapped around the fact it was Devon who stood on the steps. He quickly blocked the doorway, widening his stance to make it appear he was more confident than he actually was. He peered more closely at Devon. "What the hell happened to you? Were you in a fight?"

"Mild disagreement. Couldn't think of anywhere else to go."

Scott didn't know what to say so rather than wracking his mind for nonsense or even sense, he ushered Devon inside. Blood covered one side of Devon's thin t-shirt, the trail leading up to his nose and mouth. One of his eyes was already beginning to puff up and darken, his nose was red, and a still-oozing cut slicing through the left side of his bottom lip.

"You look like hell," Scott said, after Devon had toed off his shoes and slouched his way into the kitchen.

"Bet that feels good to say, huh?" Devon grinned then winced, throwing himself into a chair, body leaned forward, hands rubbing at the sides of his head.

Scott ran cold water over a clean cloth, wrung it out and tread cautiously toward Devon, like prey approaching a wounded lion. "Did you get hit in the head, too?"

"Might have whacked it when I fell. You're acting like I'm going to bite you, Scott."

"You have to admit it's a little weird."

Devon leaned back in his chair, head tipped up to meet Scott's eyes. "What is?"

Scott snorted. "Oh, I don't know. Just everything."

"I'm sorry—"

"Let's not get into that again. Hold still, I'm going to clean you up."

He swiped the cloth over Devon's face, being extra careful when he reached Devon's nose and lips. Dark blood stained the cloth, but the cut seemed to have stopped bleeding. He held it a bit longer to Devon's mouth while using his other hand to feel along the contours of Devon's skull.

"You've got a bit of a bump but it's not huge. Are you dizzy?" He moved the cloth away, one hand on hip as he frowned at Devon.

Devon shrugged. "Just a little."

"Yet you rode your bike here? Smart, Devon, real smart."

"Took a cab."

Scott moved back to the sink, rinsing out the cloth before handing it to Devon. "Your lip looks better but you might wanna hold this on it a bit longer. So who hit you?"

"Shadow."

Scott wracked his brain for the name. "The one whose wife just died?"

Devon nodded, hanging his head, eyes focused on his socks.

"You had a fight with someone who just lost a loved one? What the hell, Devon?"

"I never said I fought back. Maybe I should just go."

With a grunt, Devon started to rise from his chair before Scott stepped forward, placing a hand on his shoulder. "Why did you come, Dev?"

Devon stayed where he was, his body unslouching, sad brown eyes gazing into Scott's. "I missed you. I wanted to see if we could... if I could—"

Scott let his hand slide down Devon's arm. "That boat sailed. Well, sunk is more like it."

"Then why did you come to see me last weekend?"

*Fuck.* Who was the snitch? Marshall? Charlene? Dammit, he thought he'd got away free and clear from his embarrassing visit to Devon. "I was just... I wanted..."

Devon seemed to wobble a bit in the chair, Scott grabbing his shoulder before he tipped to the floor. "I think I need to lay down."

Scott managed to get Devon's partially boneless body to his bedroom before Devon passed out completely. He laid a hand on Devon's sweaty brow, checking for a fever but Devon was no warmer than usual. Placing the wet cloth he'd saved from falling to the ground on Devon's forehead, Scott sat on the edge of the bed. Scott reached for his cell phone on the nightstand, but then changed his mind.

Unfortunately, he knew a little about concussions from personal experience as a bullied teen. He'd been laid out on the



ground more than once, his mother having to come and get him before shuffling him off to the hospital. Such wonderful childhood memories—not. One of the things he did know was there was nothing to be done for a concussion except watch the concussing person for any changing symptoms. That meant he was stuck with Devon for a while; watching him as long as he slept, something Scott was quite accustomed to doing, or at least he had been.

Devon's didn't stay out for long. "Scott?" he said, voice as wary as the confusion in his eyes. "What am I... what happened?"

"Just relax. You'll be fine."

"I should go?"

A question rather than a statement, Scott didn't even pause in his answer. "No. I'll take care of you." He let his eyes drift from Devon's, grabbing a rumpled blanket from the floor and settling it over top of him. He paused when he went to move the blanket over the bloody shirt. "I'm going to help you sit up so we can get your t-shirt off."

"Gonna have your way with me?" The words were a little slurry, accompanied by a fogged twinkle in the overall fuzziness of Devon's eyes, but it was all him.

Scott shook his head. "Behave."

With Scott's help, Devon rose to a sitting position, enabling Scott to tug the crusty shirt over his head then toss it out into the hallway. Scott wiped the cloth over Devon's chest where the blood had soaked through, trying very hard to do so in a purely clinical way and not think about how much he wanted to yank on one of Devon's nipple rings with his teeth. He definitely missed those nipples.

Devon let out a gurgled sigh, his eyes closing again. "I love you."

The words were obviously the confused babblings of someone who didn't even remember why they were where they were or what had happened to put them there. Scott had to believe that for his sanity. He had to ensure his intellect took control and not that damn red, thumping lump in his chest.

Ghosting his fingers over Devon's brow, he remembered how beautiful he'd been on stage, his energy pumping the whole crowd into a frenzy. He was a born entertainer, a man meant to have an audience, yet he also seemed to thrive in the company of only Scott. Was it possible the two worlds could mesh into one extraordinary life?

Scott was still lost in his contemplations when cold fingers wrapped around his wrist. He brought his attention back to Devon's face; two shiny dimples and gentle eyes looking back at him.

"I meant it," Devon said softly. "I know your brain is logicalizing it, or whatever you wanna call it. But logical or not, I love you."

"You should get some rest." Scott tried unsuccessfully to loose himself from Devon.

"Just tell me you believe me. That's all I want." Devon held tight to Scott's hand, his thumb caressing back and forth over the delicate bones of Scott's wrist. It felt wonderful.

Scott swallowed the lump in his throat, heart pounding and bashing against his ribcage, the sound echoing so loud in his ears he thought he might go deaf. "I'm too old to date rockstars."

Devon shook his head slightly. His eyes appeared to be focusing better, his color wasn't so ghastly pale, and the maroon-shadowing around his bloodshot eye wasn't quite so startling. "I'm not a rockstar. I'm just Devon Ducaine, Missississippi boy. I like sunsets and puppies and long walks on the beach."

Scott snorted despite wanting to at least keep his part of the situation serious. "Oh shut up." Then he was in Devon's arms, tightly suctioned to his naked chest, Devon's nose snuffling the side of his neck. "Devon... I can't do this. Please."

Devon released him, but Scott only straightened-up half-way. Something desperate niggled at his brain, something he wanted to follow, but wanted to ignore at the same time. His heart swelled, his nerves buzzing and writhing, his lower extremities aching. He pressed his lips to Devon's in a totally

involuntary act, all the emotions he'd been suppressing breaking through his intellect and bursting from his heart.

He swallowed thickly, searching deeply for something in Devon's eyes. "Besides running around the world making people's ears bleed, what do you have to offer me?"

"Lazy Sundays on the porch."

Scott smirked and kissed Devon again, tongue sweeping inside then back out to lap at Devon's cut. "I like that, but what about honesty, Devon? Can you offer me that or do you still have things that are off the table?"

"I honestly love you."

"That's not going to work." Scott sat up cross-legged on the bed beside Devon. Devon rolled to his side, lifting his upper body and resting his head on his hand. "How about we start with why you were fighting with Shadow? I thought he was your best friend."

"He is... was until you came along. You were the reason for our fight actually." Devon lay his head back down on the pillow, eyes hazy with exhaustion. Scott followed him down, positioning them face-to-face.

"I don't see how that's possible."

"Shadow just lost his wife. They were together since high school." Devon paused, emotion peppering his words. Scott laid a hand on the side of his face, pushing back the unruly hair and letting his fingers linger. "He was angry that I was wasting something that he no longer had any control over. He told me I was being shallow and stubborn and just plain disagreeable when it came to you and that I should, and I quote, *pull my head out of my ass and start groveling for forgiveness before I became an ugly, bitter old man who spent all his time arguing with the Sunday paper because he had no one else who gave a shit.* End of quote."

"I think I like Shadow a lot."

Devon smiled again, dimples flashing at Scott. "The point is he was right, and I'm sorry, and I want to come clean about everything."

Scott popped out his bottom lip and pressed the side of his

head further into his pillow. "Hmm. That sounds nice but how do we do it?"

"Ask me anything."

It was Scott's turn to grin, his brain working overtime with all the questions scrabbling around in his head, every single one more important than the next. He needed to pick and choose carefully. "Have you seriously never slept with a fan?"

Devon licked at the cut on his lip. "Not intentionally."

"That's so not an answer."

"I mean I slept with someone who didn't know who I was in the beginning, but when they found out, they flipped from being satisfied with Devon to wanting more of Devastation. I ended it quickly."

"What *more* did they want?"

"Free tickets, free t-shirts, free backstage passes, free cars, free trips—"

Scott's hand moved to the back of Devon's neck, fingers rubbing at the taut muscles. "I get the picture. So no free stuff for me?"

"Anything for you."

Discomfort was the word of the moment and Scott quickly pulled his hand away. *No contact until he was absolutely sure and do not let him suck you with his Southern charm*, he reminded himself. "What about the band?"

"The band?"

"Did you really name it Smoky Grey after your cat?"

Devon twisted his neck until his face was sucked into the pillow. His voice was barely audible. "Guilty."

"That's so sweet," Scott said. Devon turned back to Scott, tiny smile playing on his lips. "And have you slept with any of those guys?"

"Nope."

"Not gay?"

"Two of them are but it would have been like fucking a brother."

"Do you have a brother?"

"No. Only child."

*Hmm. He needed something meatier before he got down to business. “Do you get off strutting around on stage?”*

Devon’s smile told Scott everything he needed to know. “It’s an adrenaline thing for sure, and yeah, my wood sometimes goes to half-mast, but it’s more that I love doing it than any one thing that sets it off.”

Scott chuckled but continued. “Are the sounds you make when you *sing* actual words or just screaming noise?”

Devon full-out laughed at that. “A bit of both, but I do write all the songs and they *are* real songs. Not your thing, huh?”

“God no. I swear I was picking blood out of my ears for days.” Scott snorted while Devon’s eyes opened wider.

“Bastard,” Devon said, mouth falling open while he reached over and cuffed Scott on the side of the head. He let his hand rest on Scott’s shoulder. Scott kind of liked it.

*Focus.* “Why the jazz club? Were you there looking for someone to hit on?”

“Nope. I was tired and bored but didn’t want to go anywhere loud and rowdy so that’s where I ended up. Second answer, I had no intention of getting my rocks off that night.”

Scott let his gaze drift so he wasn’t meeting Devon’s eyes. “Why me then?”

Devon shrugged, fingers playing along the neck of Scott’s t-shirt. “I was attracted to you. What else can I say? Just because I sing to bangers doesn’t mean they’re my type. You’re my type.”

*Steady.* “I call bullshit but I only have one more question.”

“Shoot.”

This was the toughie... the whole ball of wax... the revealing of the white elephant in the room—

“Scott?”

*Oh yeah, focus.* Scott drew in a breath, held it then asked, “Are you looking for something long-term or just the Saturday-Sunday routine that we’ve been playing?” all in one breath.

Devon’s face changed from confused to sincere in the blink of an eye. He molded his hand around the ball of Scott’s shoulder and squeezed. “I want you every day of the week, Scott, and I don’t mean that in just a sexual way. I want to build

a life with someone and I'm hoping it's you."

Scott couldn't answer the question yet. He just needed more time to let his brain catch up with his heart. "But what about the band? I read you were on hiatus or retired or whatever? What are you going to do now?"

Devon's eyes pinpointed some far-off idea. "Maybe open my own bike shop or travel for a while, and then start it up. I have plans and the means to do them, but they're kind of contingent on someone I wanna spend more time with. Do you believe me now?"

Scott wasn't ready to concede defeat, but he was almost there. He ignored Devon's question and continued his interrogation. "Anything else I should know before I decide your fate?" Being in charge was very cool.

Devon narrowed his eyes in thought. "If you googled my name you might freak out a little."

"More than finding out you're a rockstar?"

"Maybe. Probably."

"Something nasty or criminal?"

"No, not quite."

"So no jail time or prostitution?"

Devon's snicker sounded like a strangled mouse trying to squeak. "No, sorry. I don't even jaywalk."

"What might I find then?"

"Hmm, let's see. There's a foundation for cancer research in the name of Rosemary Ducaine that just might have my name attached to it."

"Charitable and loving to family. Nice."

"Devastation Caine might have some charity work he does too, maybe in the wards of children's hospitals and hospices. Something he does twice a year at least."

"So Devastation is actually a good guy, too? Another nice."

Devon laughed. "He is. Just not so nice when his lover accuses him of doing nasty things with his groupies."

"Groupies? That's way more intense than just fans."

"Still haven't slept with any of them."

"Anything else Devastation Caine might be known for?"

“He has a moderately large bank account that he has to share with Devon Ducaine, plus a house on Maui, a condo in Venice and a penchant to spoil those he loves.”

“Now you’re just trying to win points.”

“Devon Ducaine, on the other hand, once won a high school science fair, likes spending Sundays in bed or on sunlit porches, and he thinks nerdy nature shows are keen. He also hopes one day to learn why list-making is so important and how he can offer his help when the people he loves are overcome with anxiety.”

Scott didn’t know what to say. The word perfect came to mind but hell if he was going to say that to Devon. The man did not need his ego stroked anymore than he’d just done himself. Instead, he told the truth. “I’m speechless.”

Devon groaned. “Damn. That’s not so good. I really need an answer before I pass out.”

“What was the question?” Scott tangled his fingers with Devon’s on his shoulder.

“Do you believe I love you?”

“How can you say it so easily?”

“Not everything in life has to be hard, babe.”

“You want a pre-nup, don’t you?”

Devon groaned again. “Scott.”

“I’m just... it’s just that...” Scott sighed, moving their entwined hands between them. “The world can be a really ugly place. Do we even have a chance?”

“All we can do is try.” Devon’s reassuring smile made Scott want to either smack him upside the head or kiss him until he turned blue.

He chose cynicism over both. “You sound like you’re going to burst into some God-awful Beatles song.”

Devon faked a gasp. “You don’t even like the Beatles?”

Scott finally returned Devon’s smile. “I liked their matching outfits, very OCD.”

Devon closed his eyes, bringing Scott’s hand to his lips. “I have a lot of work to do, don’t I?”

Scott moved in closer, rubbing his nose against Devon’s in

what was probably the biggest chick-move he'd ever made. "I believe you love me. I'm not over the shock that you do, but I believe you."

"Do you forgive me?" Devon asked, his eyes blinking slower than before, heavy with sleep and more than likely tinges of concussion, as well.

Scott paused before letting his lips curl. "I forgive you."

"And the love part?"

He answered with a kiss, desperate, hungry but sweet at the same time. After pulling away, he rested his forehead against Devon's. "I love you, Devon, but if you ever lie to me again I swear you'll have to work the word *de-nutt*ed into your stage name."

"Wow, vicious. I like."

Scott noticed the increased heaviness in Devon's eyelids. Winding his hand around the back of Devon's head, he pulled him closer. "Perfect. My plan is working."

"I love you," Devon slurred, "but I think I'm gonna pass out now."

"Sleep."

"...be here when I wake up?"

"Probably."

More slurring. "Shkott..."

"I'm not going anywhere. Tomorrow's Sunday... best day of the week."

Fin



# AUTHOR BIO

K-Lee Klein has lived in one part of Western Canada or another her entire life. She's a doting mother of three now-grown kids and has had characters and plots running around her head for as long as she can remember. She dipped her toe into the m/m authors' pool in August of 2011, was first published that December, and still can't believe she's supposed to think of herself as an author. She hopes to continued substituting her passion for writing beautiful, emotional men for her previous jobs as a hockey manager/coach, school band volunteer and overall chauffeur.

K-lee lives with an overly-patient husband who totally does not get her thing for gay men, two spoiled but wonderful sons (who don't get it either), two also spoiled but beautiful cats, many phone calls with her daughter who has already left the nest, and an abundance of fabulous gay men—of all sizes and shapes—bouncing off the walls of her skull, competing for their turns to tell their stories. She is currently being published by MLR and Less Than Three Press, and is both excited and nervous as hell to attend GayRomLit as an honest-to-goodness author in October.

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