

Maximum Exposure

A Palmer Novella

Talia Carmichael

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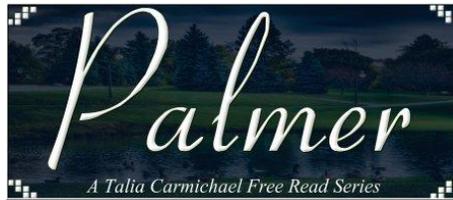
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A Palmer Series Novella

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About Palmer Series: Palmer is a fictional town I created for my free read series. The books will be about various characters that live or visit this town that will be central to my free read series. Each book will bring you deeper into the community, people and environment that make up Palmer.

Come on the journey to Palmer.

Maximum Exposure

Book one in the Palmer Series

Calvin Martin is taken off guard by his attraction when he finally comes face to face with Owen Granger - one of his big brother's best friends. He doesn't think Owen is interested but once Owen lets him know that he is, Calvin is all for jumping into bed but Owen has other ideas. Owen wants to date and then let things progress. Calvin will agree to a date but progression was something that needed to be nudged hard. Once they sleep together both men find their expectations shifted but they are unable to verbalize it to each other. It will take an exposure of a maximum kind for them to admit what they want.

Maximum Exposure

Dedication

To the readers, thanks for your support.

Chapter One

Calvin Martin inhaled deeply, enjoying the crisp spring air. He loved spring in California, and more specifically, in Palmer. Spring in the town of Palmer was, in his opinion, a beautiful sight of renewal. He strode toward the building, but stopped, then looked up. The sign that read “Martin's Books & Bakery” rested in the center of the two side-by-side spacious buildings. They were on the one corner of this line of stores on Indigo Avenue. Although they were actually considered to be on Indigo Avenue, being on the corner, they were able to enjoy some of the perks of being on Indigo Place--the street on which the Indigo Lake Park Boardwalk area was located.

On the bakery half of the business, there was also a doorway, which led to Indigo Place so customers could come and go. The windows on that side offered a scenic view of the boardwalk and water beyond. During the summer months, their business, along with the other stores and shops which faced the boardwalk side of the park, put out tables and shading outside for patrons to sit and enjoy. Through the front windows of both the bakery and bookstore, there was a view of the massive Indigo Lake Park.

In Palmer, the areas of Indigo Avenue and Indigo Place were a prime location, in general, and this stretch of stores specifically was in high demand for businesses wanting to open there. The location had a quaint and welcoming feel. The area was unique, because each owner actually owned the land and building or buildings their business was in, and most of the businesses had been in the families that owned them for generations. Each building was on an individual parcel, and most had a little space between them. Others had more space, depending on what sort of business they had. Each of the businesses had its own style and was as unique as its owner. The buildings ranged from an antebellum mansion that was a bed and breakfast to a small brick building that was a custom dress shop. There were many varieties of places to shop, stay, eat, or see.

A sense of pride filled Calvin as he looked at the building that housed their business. He usually didn't get to see their family-owned business from the front area. Calvin usually parked in the lot at the back. Each shop on Indigo Avenue and Indigo Place had individual secured areas in the back for parking and offloading or loading merchandise, according to what their store had in it.

Today, Calvin had an errand to run and thought it easier to park in the customer parking lot. He lowered his gaze and glanced around the areas of the well-lit, massive parking lot that he could see. They shared the space with the park and Indigo Place. There was no parking on the boardwalk side. The lot was almost empty. At 3 a.m., the usually busy area was quiet. He looked down the line of other businesses that stretched farther than the eye could see. From where he stood, he could see light spilling out of a few of them. He knew that a few of the stores got an early start, like they did, to get ready for their customers.

Calvin continued on his way toward the front door. He stepped on the sidewalk and passed the front window with a stylized design that filled the glass, depicting books and a variety of baked goods on a table with "Martin's Books & Bakery" stretched over it. The same design was in all four of the large front windows of the shops.

Although it was dark inside through the glass, Calvin could make out the book display that was in front of the window. He knew that today was the day that his older brother, Lucas, would be changing that display, as well as the other one in front of the other bookstore window. Calvin, Lucas, along with their cousins, Hugo and Sam co-owned Martin's Books & Bakery. Calvin and Hugo ran the bakery part of the business. Lucas and Sam were in charge of the bookstore.

Calvin passed the door, then the next window before coming to the one that was the bakery window. Their table display was set up, but was without any baked goods. They changed the two displays on a daily basis. They had an arrangement with the bed and breakfast that they would buy whatever there was on display. Usually about an hour before closing, they packed it up and someone delivered it. As Calvin went to the

door, his mind was already on what the display would be today. Since it was his turn to be in earlier than Hugo, he would be in charge of coming up with the display design. Lucas was scheduled to be in early today, too. The rotated the early shifts for both sides of the business between them. Hugo and Sam would be in about six o'clock.

Going to the front door, Calvin opened it, went in, and locked it behind him. Not hearing anything from the bookstore, Calvin skirted the tables and headed toward the arched doorway that linked the two buildings. Calvin touched the counter that was beside the arched area. It was there so they could check out customers before they left the bakery to go into the bookstore. He glanced in and noted the matching counter, which was used to check out anyone exiting the bookstore to go to the bakery.

"Lucas!" He called out.

Not getting a response, he frowned. Calvin hadn't seen Lucas's car in his parking space when he'd left this morning. They lived in the family home they had recently renovated to create separate apartments, parking areas, and entrances. At that time, they had also renovated the business. Sam and Hugo, who lived across the street in their family home, had also renovated to reconfigure the house to accommodate two separate living spaces.

His brother and Sam usually didn't have to come in as early as he and Hugo did to get the bakery opened, but they always did anyway. That was even more so on the day after a book shipment, and they had gotten a shipment yesterday. On non-shipment days, Lucas and Sam usually got a few things done, then made their way over to the kitchens and helped out. It was as they had always done when they worked the store when their parents owned it. Today was Lucas's day to open, and it wasn't like his brother to be late. Calvin pulled out his cell and called Lucas. The call went straight to voice mail. He debated if he should call Hugo or Sam so they could go over to the house. Calvin decided not to and put away his phone. He'd wait a bit to see if Lucas arrived, then call if he didn't.

Calvin stepped back and faced the bakery main floor. He admired the changes that were only a few months old. The booths on the walls of the bakery had all been

replaced with newer ones with plush, comfortable cushions in a rich brown color that could go with anything when they changed the color themes for the bakery based on their whims. At this time, it was rich colors for spring. The tables and seating in the center had also been changed and were in the same color theme.

Calvin paused beside one of the tables and shifted the vase in the center. They put fresh flowers on each table and booth daily. Pearson's, the floral shop a few stores over, delivered and set them up, along with various bouquets of flowers they put on each counter in the bakery as well as the bookstore. Calvin glanced through the arched doorway, then turned and made his way to the kitchen. He went behind the counter that ran wall to wall and faced the front windows of the store. Calvin pushed the swinging doorway and went into the back area. He strode across the hall then opened the door.

Calvin went first to the stereo and cued up his play list. He smiled. Since he was there first, he got to choose the music they played as they baked. Hugo would complain about his music, yet sing along with it, just as Calvin would with Hugo's. Those who worked the bakery main floor had their own music they played, and that was also based on who opened first. Music set, Calvin got to work on getting his first things done for the day. In moments, he was lost in making pastries. He whistled along with "Shameless" by Garth Brooks, and then he started to belt out the lyrics and dance along the length of the table. The music cut off. Calvin glanced up and scowled.

"You're late. And you know the rule."

"No one except the one who put it on touches the music," Lucas said.

He smiled, dimples appearing on either side of his lips. Calvin eyed him, noting he was, as usual, casually dressed in jeans and a button down shirt with a jacket thrown over it. Lucas looked as if he had spent hours getting ready. Calvin knew Lucas didn't spend time thinking on what his jacket, shirt, or pants looked like. He picked out something made sure the colors didn't clash too badly with the one item he actually did put thought into that he loved to put on. Lucas came around the table. Calvin looked down and laughed.

“Orange socks.”

“With chocolate colored bunnies. See.” Lucas lifted his pant leg to show him.

“Those are new,” Calvin said.

“Yep. Just got them.”

Calvin raised his head and met amused steel blue-grey eyes. They were just like his own, and those of their cousins. Calvin studied his brother’s features, which were also similar to his own, and those of the rest of their family. Lucas’s black hair was combed neater than Calvin was sure his was. Calvin’s hair was shaggier. Lucas leaned his brawny frame against the edge of the table.

“Get away from my table.” Calvin flicked some flour at him.

Lucas didn’t move. A flash startled Calvin. He glanced toward where it had come from and realized they were not alone. The man who had taken a picture lowered the camera. Calvin’s breath caught as olive green eyes met his. He observed the stranger who he saw was maybe an inch or two taller than Lucas or his own six-foot height. The man’s face was lightly tanned and classically handsome, with an aquiline nose, high cheekbones, and slightly rounded chin. The man smiled, revealing a dimple at the right side of his mouth. A ball cap turned backward covered his hair, so Calvin was only able to see that it seemed to be dark brown. Something about the man’s features seemed familiar. Then it dawned on him.

“You’re a Granger, aren’t you?” Calvin knew the family well, and the features, eye color, and the hair color he could see was all Granger.

“Now, should I be offended that you don’t know who I am?” a deep, gravelly voice asked.

At the voice, Calvin knew who he was. Although he had spoken to him many times, he had never met the man who was one of his brother Lucas’s best friends. And if he was a Granger, then his hair color wasn’t just dark brown. It was various shades of brown and blonde, which melded together to remind Calvin of a tabby cat.

“If he doesn’t know you, he sure as hell won’t know me,” an amused modulated baritone said.

Calvin glanced at the man he hadn't even noticed. He also recognized his voice. He was another of Lucas's best friends. The man had the features, height, and hair shade of the Granger's, but the eye color made Calvin know he was a Weber. Neither man looked like the pictures he had seen in their family's homes. They were more muscular, and although they were smiling, there was a harder look on their faces and shadows in their gazes. Calvin knew they were photojournalists and had been traveling extensively to war-torn countries for years. They hadn't been home for a few years, and hadn't even been able to make it to his parents' funeral. The rest of the Granger and Weber families had attended, as well as Lucas's other best friend.

Through Lucas, Calvin had sort of known of the families, but it wasn't until his parents died three years ago that he had gotten to really know them. From what he had learned the last three years, the two families had merged via the marriage of a Weber to the only female Granger. The teasing between the elder Granger's had revealed the story that the four Granger brothers had given the Weber suitor a hard time before they accepted him into the family. When they had, they had also brought in his twin brother as one of the family. At the time, the Weber's didn't have any other family.

When they became part of the Granger's, they had gained an extensive family. As the years passed, they all had children, and some of those children were now married and with families of their own. When the Martin's parents, aunt, and uncle had died, the Granger's and Weber's had been there for them, giving them the emotional support as well as helping them with the businesses as they got all their affairs straightened out. They had gotten to know most all of them very well. Sam, Hugo, Lucas, and Calvin had all come to think of them as part of their family. They were invited to the family get-togethers and functions. Calvin still hadn't gotten an accurate count on how many Granger's or Weber's there actually were. He'd given up after reaching the count of fifty. The only two he, Hugo, and Sam didn't know were the men standing before him. Calvin addressed the man he had seen first.

"Owen, I finally get to meet you. You're to blame for the sock thing. We are so going to have a talk." He turned his attention to the other man, who was smiling

widely. "And you, Reagan, are to blame for boxers. We are going to have words," Calvin promised.

Calvin still remembered when Lucas had gone to college, then came home that first semester for a visit and had gotten into wearing outrageous socks and boxers. Over the years, it had become part of his wardrobe. Lucas might not care about his clothes, but his boxers and socks had to match. He enjoyed bright colors and designs, the wilder the better. And it was all due to these two men.

"Oh, I forgot to show you those. Owen and Reagan got them for me. They're the best," Lucas said.

"I don't want to see your drawers." Calvin flicked flour at him again.

Lucas hadn't moved. He was always threatening to show them his underwear. Another flash came. Calvin looked back toward the men and noted that this time, it was Reagan who had taken a picture.

"Which one of you wears the outrageous colored boxers and who does the socks?" he asked curiously.

From where he stood, he could see their jeans covered long legs, and below the hem was construction boots. The men exchanged looks then looked back at him. Calvin knew that expression from his brother and cousins.

"You'll have to figure it out," Owen replied.

Calvin heard something more in his tone. He dismissed it as his imagination.

"Is there a reason you keep taking our picture?" He gestured at the cameras each of the men held.

"For the website and advertising that you insisted needs updating," Lucas replied.

Calvin glanced at his brother and frowned. "But I thought we were doing that in a few months, and had decided to go with someone else since G & W Photography is always booked so far in advance."

As they were renovating, they had, after much debate, decided to update their website, media advertising, and store computer systems. For their site, they had

decided to make it more up to date with their new look and able to take orders that way as well as list what they had on a daily basis. They had even hired Eli Simmons - Calvin's best friend that he'd met in college - to handle the design, implementation, and maintenance of the website, as well as designing all of their advertising. He'd also continue keeping up to date with the changes they did to the bakery and bookstore. Calvin hadn't thought they would hire Eli, since he and Lucas didn't get along. But Lucas had surprisingly agreed.

Eli had given them a break on what would have been an expensive reworking of a commerce site, when they had agreed to provide office space for his web design business. His spacious headquarters was at the end of the hall, complete with two offices, a conference room, a break room, storage area, reception room, and his own entrance/exit that led out onto Indigo Place. There was also a door that gave access to the hall that ran the length of the back of the bookstore and bakery. Eli hadn't started working in the office yet; he was still working on moving all the stuff he needed into the space. His friend had also gotten them a break on the price to upgrade the computer systems they used in the store for checkout, stock, and everything else, as well as increasing their system security.

"Yes, we did." Lucas's statement pulled Calvin back to the conversation. "But when these two called me last night to tell me they were back in Palmer and that they were finally going to pull their weight as co-owners at G & W Photography--"

"Hey. The business was in good hands with the rest of our partners," Reagan interjected.

Like the Martin's business, G & W Photography was family-owned. It was passed down from two elder Granger's and a Weber to the next generation of Granger's and Weber's. In addition to Owen and Reagan, there were three others who shared ownership of the business. G & W Photography was very successful and highly in demand. They were booked months to years in advance, according to the function. They handled anything from photos to video, including weddings, social engagements,

and portraits. Their tight schedule was why the Martin's hadn't even attempted to set up something for the photos they wanted taken.

Lucas continued as if Reagan hadn't interrupted. "Instead of gallivanting all over the world. And the best news yet is that they're back in Palmer to stay, permanently. As we talked, I happened to mention we had some photos we were getting done for our site and promotions. Somebody got angry that we dared even think of using someone else to take pictures for us." Lucas straightened and turned to face the men.

"You should have asked one of the photographers at G & W to take them. They would have made space for you. You're family," Owen stated.

"We know that, but we didn't want to put anyone out," Lucas replied.

"Even if one of the other three couldn't have done it, Dad would have done it himself," Owen replied, then smiled.

Lucas cursed. "Damn it. You told him."

"All of them. They are also peeved that you didn't call. You'll have to make your apologies. All of you, including your cousin's." Owen looked at Calvin, too.

Calvin inclined his head.

Owen spoke again. "Now, since that's out of the way... we just got back and don't have anything on the schedule. We're all yours for as long as you need us."

Calvin knew it would be stupid to turn down the offer. The photographers at G & W Photography were geniuses behind the camera. And from the work he had seen in various magazines and on the television, these two were even better.

"Okay. If you tell me your fee, we'll cut you a check."

Owen spoke to Lucas. "Now, why is your little brother insulting us?" He glanced at Reagan and shook his head. "Lucas is sadly lacking in training him."

Reagan nodded solemnly. Owen returned his attention to Calvin, who glared at both men.

"Hardy, har, har. You're so funny."

"I know. It's a gift," Owen retorted.

"We're going to start bringing in the rest of our things," Reagan said.

“Okay. When you get back I’ll show you to the vacant office you can use while you’re here,” Lucas said.

Reagan turned and walked toward the door. Owen stared at Calvin briefly, then turned and followed his cousin. Calvin watched his loose-legged stride as he walked away. The back of his tee-shirt covered his ass. Calvin itched to see how his ass looked in those jeans. Owen’s frame disappeared out the door.

“Their return is good timing. Now we’ll have some awesome pictures,” Lucas said.

Calvin nodded absently.

“I’ll go show them where to set up, and then I’ll be back to help.”

‘Don’t you have a book shipment to unpack?’

“Crap. I forgot all about that. Okay. I’ll get them settled then get started on it. I’ll come back when I can,” Lucas stated.

He strode toward the door.

“My music!” Calvin called.

Lucas paused and touched a button on the stereo. At the sound of the music, Calvin threw a spoon at him.

“Not yours. Mine,” Calvin stated.

“Jazz is good for your soul.” Lucas snickered and went out the door.

Calvin went back to working on the pastries he was making. His thoughts were filled with the unexpected development of their photographers. More precisely, Owen Granger. In the times he had spoken with him or seen his picture, he hadn’t even been attracted. But seeing the man up close, he was. That could be a problem. Calvin remembered that smile on his lips.

I wonder if his lips are as soft as they look.

Owen was grateful that his tee-shirt covered his erection. He couldn’t believe that he was lusting after Lucas’s kid brother. Well, he wasn’t exactly a kid, since Calvin

had turned twenty-nine on his last birthday. That was only five years between them. Owen shook his head at his justifying why it would be okay to ask Calvin out for a date. Hell, he hadn't had a date in a long time.

Reagan's voice drew his attention. "As we decided on the way over here, you get the bookstore and I'll handle the bakery."

"I'll take the bakery," Owen stated.

"Why the change?" Reagan asked.

Owen wasn't one to hide what he was feeling. "Calvin...he's interesting."

"Yes, he is. Not to mention sexy as hell. He's more my type than yours." Reagan chuckled.

Owen glanced at him sharply. Although what Reagan said was true, he didn't like hearing it. He usually went for men bigger than himself, but something about Calvin made him want to get to know him. Reagan paused before their pile of equipment and studied him. His eyes narrowed, and then he shook his head.

"Damn. Not you, too. It has to be an epidemic. I wonder if there's a vaccine against it," Reagan said.

"What are you babbling about?"

"The look that is on your face. It's the one we've seen whenever one of the family finds 'the one'." He made air quotes, then said, "Most recently, it was the same look on Wallace's and Felix's faces when we video chatted with them, and they talked about Diane and Shelly that first time. And you know what happened with that. I'm going to have to get a vaccine for it."

Owen frowned at his words. Wallace, his oldest brother, had finally been bitten by the love bug and was engaged to marry a wonderful woman. Felix was a cousin who also met his mate, a great woman named Shelly. They had met both women for the first time in person last night, and the love was plain to see between both couples. The family was in the midst of planning a double wedding.

"For God's sake. I just want to date him."

"That isn't all you want to do," Reagan retorted.

"Yeah. Maybe more than that." Owen grinned.

"With that wicked grin on your face, that maybe is a definitely," Reagan said.

"What is he up to now? Christ, Owen. You just got back to town. You need to be here at least another day before you start getting into mischief," Lucas said.

Owen glanced at his buddy and retorted, "I'm not the one who gets into trouble. You yahoos drag me into it."

"God, I missed you guys. The four of us are all back in the same place. Leo and I just didn't get into as much mischief without you. Hey, you want to come over for some movies?" Lucas said.

"Cheesy Syfy movies," Owen said.

"Yep. My brother and cousins have refused to watch them with me anymore. They don't appreciate Leo's or my snarky genius."

They all laughed. Leo was the final one in their close circle of friends. They had all met in college and became friends, then best buddies. Their bond had strengthened over the years, even with Owen and Reagan traveling so much. Sometimes, Lucas and Leo had flown to meet them somewhere close to where they were working.

Owen studied his friend. Then, with his usual bluntness, he spoke.

"I'm going to ask your brother out on a date."

Lucas stared at him, and then his eyes narrowed. "Are you asking me or telling me?"

"Telling."

"Then why even mention it." Lucas crossed his arms over his chest.

"I'm giving you a heads up. I'm sure you would do the same if you wanted to date anyone in my family."

Lucas observed him silently a little longer then grinned, "Okay. And if I ever do decide to date one of your family I'll tell you, too."

Owen hadn't expected that response. Lucas knew his family members who were gay well enough. He expected by now if he had wanted to date one of them, he would have. He wondered whom Lucas could have his eye on to possibly date.

Lucas answered his unspoken question. "Hey. You have some handsome men in your family. Even old Reagan has filled out nicely."

"Uh-uh. Stay away from me. There's a sickness of love going around. I'm not getting attached to it. I like being single." Reagan crossed his fingers and stepped back.

"What are you talking about?" Lucas laughed.

"He's worried about the upcoming nuptials in the family. And in his warped mind, it's spreading. I just want to date Calvin."

"That's how it starts. Then it spreads, and before you know it, you're a couple," Reagan said in a horror-filled voice.

Owen looked at Lucas, and they both laughed.

Owen smacked Reagan on the shoulder then said, "I promise it's not something that's catching. Let's put this stuff in the office then get to work."

Reagan picked up some of the equipment, grumbling too low for him to make out. Owen lifted some and Lucas helped. He showed them the office, then left to get to work. He and Reagan made another trip then grabbed what they needed. As Reagan left to go to the bookstore side, Owen placed each of their laptops on the desk. He grabbed his camera and went out into the hall. The office they had been given was closer to the kitchen. Owen paused in the doorway and noticed Calvin was at the stereo. The music was again loud. He studied Calvin from the back. With the baggy tee-shirt Calvin wore, Owen couldn't tell how muscular his lean frame was. He also couldn't see his ass, because it was covered.

Owen moved closer until he stood directly behind him. Calvin didn't know he was there. He was bopping his head to the music and dancing in place. Calvin turned and hit right into his frame. He stumbled back. Owen caught his arm, steadying him and stopping his backward movement. Startled steel blue-grey eyes met his. Calvin's shaggy black hair fell in wild disarray around his face. Owen studied the features that were like Lucas's. The full nose, rounded chin, chiseled cheeks, and Cupid's bow mouth melded together to make a captivating visage. On Lucas, he noted that it made him

handsome. But on Calvin, it was sexy. Owen's cock went even harder. He inhaled, and the scent of man, flour, and something else he couldn't place filled him.

"Oh... sorry. Didn't hear you come in." Calvin smiled.

Owen watched his lips and wanted to taste him. He lowered his head.

Chapter Two

A noise made Owen straighten and glance toward the door. A man with features similar to Calvin was watching them.

"Hugo. You're early," Calvin said.

"I remembered we had to change the window display, so I came in." His voice was a deep bass.

"Thanks. Oh. This is Owen Granger."

"I figured he was a Granger. He has that look." Hugo came forward, hand extended.

Owen released Calvin then shook Hugo's hand.

"He and his cousin Reagan are taking the footage for the promotion and website."

"I see. I guess that's why you all had to be so up close and personal. Must make sure to catch every detail of your...footage." Hugo smirked.

"Hugo. It's not like that. I didn't hear him and he was keeping me from falling," Calvin hissed.

"That's what they are calling it these days? Huh. Whoops, I fell onto--"

Calvin stepped forward and put his hand over Hugo's mouth. Hugo continued to speak, but Owen couldn't make out what he was saying. He didn't need to. Owen noted what Lucas had told him about this cousin was true. Hugo was the troublemaker of the family. He had a devilish look on his face as well as in his gaze.

"Ignore him. He doesn't have a filter between his brain and mouth," Calvin said to Owen. Then he spoke to Hugo. "Are you going to behave?"

Hugo gave him a look of disbelief then snorted. Calvin slowly removed his hand then chuckled.

“Yeah. That’s too much to ask for. Come on. We need to work.” Calvin pushed at Hugo’s to get him moving.

“And what will Mr. Footage be doing?” Hugo asked.

“Don’t mind me. Just go ahead with whatever you usually do. I’ll just take pictures,” Owen said.

“You’re not going to use the shots you took earlier.” Calvin made it a statement, not a question.

“Yes. Lucas mentioned you wanted slicker looking shots with posed food items and book displays. But for your demographic, it would be best to get a more spontaneous feel interjected with those shots. Play up on your natural chemistry. It will give you the maximum exposure,” Owen stated in a low tone.

Calvin’s brow furrowed then cleared. He nodded and retreated back to where he had been working. Calvin washed his hands in the sink, dried them, then started making pastries. Hugo moved over to where he was, washed up, then stood beside him. The two men worked in tandem, making pastries. Owen watched as they made the intricate design. He snapped pictures. The men were tense, then slowly relaxed as they got used to him and the camera. He saw them smile as they teased each other. Calvin paused then laughed. Owen captured the joy on his face through his lens. He lowered the camera and breathed out. He could imagine that look geared toward him, then kissing him and taking him to bed. Owen hadn’t even gotten around to asking him out yet, and he was already planning how long it would take him to be deep in the recess of his body.

Owen shifted, trying to relive some pressure on the zipper pressed against his hardened member. Yep. He was going to ask Calvin out. Soon.

* * * * *

Owen tapped his thumb on the steering wheel he gripped as he drove. His impatience had grown as the days passed and he was around Calvin. He'd gotten to know the ins and outs of the bakery and bookstore that made up Martin's Books & Bakery. There was a strong camaraderie and closeness among the Martin men. It was much like Owen's own family. In the days he had been there, he'd gotten to know the cousins and Calvin very well. He'd even gotten to see another side of Lucas. Owen already knew Lucas was a savvy man, but seeing him at his business, that was even more obvious. All the Martin men knew their business. Although he had gotten to know the men well, it was Calvin he couldn't seem to get as close to as he wanted.

Since that brief moment the first day, Calvin had managed to avoid being alone with him. At first, Owen had thought it was just circumstance, but eventually he came to realize that, for some reason, Calvin ensured they were never alone. It was frustrating and baffling. Why was Calvin avoiding him? He'd felt the attraction between them, but now Calvin had retreated from it. And Owen was determined to find out why. Five days of avoidance was enough. Owen turned, then drove and stopped before the gate. He glanced at the clock and noted that it was a few minutes before 3 a.m. It was Calvin's early week, so there would be no one around for a few hours while they discussed things. A few moments later, lights appeared behind him. As the SUV got closer, Owen recognized the deep indigo Subaru Tribeca. It pulled up beside him. The passenger side window lowered, and Owen lowered the driver's window of his Durango Citadel.

"Morning, Owen. I didn't realize you would be here so early." Calvin's face was leery.

Owen stifled a smile and replied, "Morning, Calvin. Are you going to let me in?" He emphasized the 'in'. Calvin's eyes narrowed, and then he shrugged.

"Follow me." Calvin's window slid upward.

"It's just your imagination, Cal. Rein it in," Owen heard him mutter as the window closed.

During his time around Calvin, Owen had heard him mutter various things as he worked or did something. After replying to Calvin on one such occasion, and he not knowing what Owen was referring to, Calvin had told him that he tended to mutter and to just ignore his rambling. Owen had done as he said. But this mutter was one he would not be ignoring. The gate slid open. From his various times here, Owen knew that each of those who worked here had a computerized opener that opened the gates. They changed the code often. Calvin drove in, and Owen followed him. He parked next to Calvin, got out, and joined Calvin at the back of his vehicle. Owen viewed the various boxes piled inside.

“What’s all this?”

“Some new display trays for the counters. I picked them up on Monday, but took them home, and I kept forgetting to bring them in. I’ve been distracted.” Calvin reached for a box.

Owen grinned. He hoped it was because of him. Calvin sure as hell had him distracted. Owen lifted a box and followed him to the door. Calvin punched in a code at the door, and it clicked open.

“The coded locks are a good idea. Saves juggling looking for keys. I’ll have to suggest we put it on our business, too.” Owen followed him inside.

Calvin spoke as he walked across the hall, then pushed into the swinging doors that lead into the kitchen. “It’s a fairly new change. We did it during the renovations. Upgraded the whole thing. It saves time looking for keys. But of course, Lucas bitched about it. As you know, he hates change. You would think a man who takes such pride in outrageous colors for his boxers and socks would be a little more adaptable to change.”

“Lucas is a unique man.” Owen chuckled.

Calvin continued across the spacious room, skirting the various tables as he went. “He is that. Damn pain in my ass.”

Calvin used his hip to open the swinging door and held it open. Owen passed him, stepping into the front hall and going on to the swinging gate that led into the main part of the store. He waited for Calvin.

"Thanks. I can put you in touch with Howie. He's really good with security. He gave us a break on price because of Eli." Calvin placed the box on the floor behind the counter that ran wall to wall.

It was the main counter for the bakery. On the left and right side of the shop, midway to the door, there were two other smaller, three-sided counters that had a register and display cases for the pastries. Calvin gestured for him to place the box down and Owen complied. He straightened and frowned. There was a warmth and familiarity in Calvin's voice when he said the name Eli.

"Who's Eli?" he asked, trying for a measured tone.

Calvin glanced at him sharply. His look made Owen know he'd failed.

"Why?"

"Are you dating him? Is that why you keep running from me? All you had to do was say so," Owen said.

Calvin's eyes widened, and then they narrowed. "Wait a minute. I'm not running from you. I just didn't want to make you uncomfortable by making an advance. You're my brother's best friend."

"So, does that mean you aren't involved with this Eli?"

"Oh God, no. We'd kill each other. He's one of my best friends."

Owen relaxed. He hadn't heard Calvin mention another best friend. A few days ago, Calvin had introduced him and Reagan to the one of the co-owners of the florist place that was a few shops over. He'd mentioned the man was his best friend.

"Good. By the way, I'd be open to an advance." Owen turned and headed to the gates.

"He says that then walks away," Calvin muttered.

The sound of hurried footsteps came from behind Owen, who turned back to face him. Calvin didn't slow. He came up to him and pressed against him. He slid his

hand behind Owen's head and kissed him. His soft lips pressed against Calvin's, moving on his lips. Calvin's tongue slid along his lips.

"Open up." His voice was husky and demanding.

Owen complied. Calvin's tongue slid into his mouth, stroking everywhere he could reach. At the hungry demand in his kiss, Owen locked his knees and slid his hands around Calvin's waist. Calvin moved closer to him, pushing him back. Owen moaned, then grunted as his back hit a wall. Calvin crowded him, caging him between his body and the hard surface. Calvin's grip at the back of his head tightened, and then he slid his hands down the side of his neck. Owen shivered. He dueled tongues with Calvin. A moan filled his mouth. Calvin continued his downward movements, his hands kneading along Owen's chest, ribcage, then stomach. Owen groaned, tightening his grip around Calvin's waist. The touches reminded him of how he manipulated the flour when he worked on the parties the bakery made.

Calvin made a purring sound then moved lower. Owen cupped his ass, squeezing the firm globes. Calvin's whimper vibrated in his mouth. Calvin's hands slid over the front of Owen's tee-shirt, over his building erection. Owen stiffened, then canted his hips into the touch. Calvin made an impatient sound, and then his touch became firmer. Owen snapped out of his lustful daze, pulling away from their kiss.

"Wait...not like this. I want to take you out on a date," Owen said.

Calvin blinked, opening his lids. Dazed steel blue-grey eyes met his, and then they cleared, and Calvin scowled.

"To hell with dinner. We can do that later. After this." He squeezed Owen's cock.

Owen moaned then gulped. He pulled Calvin's hand away, raising it and kissing the back of his knuckles. Calvin shivered.

"Dinner first."

Calvin's look was mutinous. "No one is around. We can have now and then later."

“God, Calvin. You’re killing me. I want to, but once we start, I don’t want to stop. I don’t think your partners would appreciate me keeping you locked in your office all day. Hell, knowing Lucas, he’d take down the door with a blow torch,” Owen said.

“We have employees who can take up the slack. Besides, they would never know what was going on. The offices are sound-proofed.”

“They are? Why?” Owen asked as he made note of it for the future.

“Part of the renovation. That was the one thing Lucas insisted on. He said he was tired of hearing our music blasting and our screaming at vendors when we had issues. Hugo tends to get colorful when they piss him off,” Calvin said.

From what he had seen of Hugo, Owen could believe it. The man didn’t have a filter. He offset his brother Samuel, who was quiet and seemed very reserved.

“Come on. We can go to my office.” Calvin stepped back.

Owen stilled him, shaking his head. “Later. You didn’t answer me. Will you have dinner with me?”

Calvin rolled his eyes then leaned against his body. “Fine. I’ll go to dinner with you.” He kissed him thoroughly, then stepped back. “I hope you know that I expect to be naked with you soon after dinner.”

Calvin stepped back then went around him to go into the back. Owen blew out a breath, adjusted his cock in his jeans, then went to finish helping him. As they brought in boxes, Calvin kept brushing against him, making what seemed like random touches, and basically tempted him. After they were finished, Owen made his escape to the temporary office they had. He sat in the chair behind the desk and opened his laptop. As he waited for it to boot up, Owen wondered how he would be able to keep his hands off Calvin.

“Hey. I forgot. Howie usually comes in today. He comes in every Saturday, gets some books from the bookstore, then comes to the bakery side to get some pastries and tea. Then he spends some time reading. All of us usually wander by his booth at various times and keep him company. We debate books and so on. I can introduce you

to him then. That is, if you want him to look at your security." Calvin crossed the room as he spoke. He sat on the corner of the desk near him.

"Sure. That sounds good." Owen nodded.

"Also, I don't know how you don't know Eli. He maintains the website for your business," Calvin said.

"He does?"

"Yep. I showed him the site about a year ago, I think. Anyway, he said it sucked. I laughed, thinking it was funny. But then later, Wallace thanked me for showing it to Eli. He'd contacted your company about it and they spoke. He was able to make the site more pleasing. I know he gets a lot of business from you all through recommendations to people who want their photos set up on a website." Calvin stretched his legs out then crossed his ankles.

Owen's gaze was drawn to his jeans. He could see his erection pushing against the zipper. Calvin chuckled, a sensual sound. Owen raised his gaze. Calvin's smile was as sexy as the sound.

"Umm... I remember something about hiring a designer, but not the details," Owen said. "Wallace or Reagan usually deals with those sorts of things for the business. They're good at finagling the best services. Actually, Reagan would be better to talk with Howie. I'll get some of the basics from Howie then give it to him Monday."

"He can just meet him."

"He's not coming by today. He's working on getting his things settled into his new house." Owen glanced down again at Calvin's cloth-covered cock.

"He has a house already?"

"Yeah. He made arrangements to get it before we came back. Yesterday was moving in day. That's why we left earlier than usual--to get him moved in."

"What about you?" Calvin asked.

"I'm staying in the garage apartment at my folks' place. It's small, but works for now. I'm still trying to decide where I want to move to," Owen said.

"How big is your bed?" Calvin asked.

“A full.”

“I like to spread out, so we’ll go to my place. I have a king-sized bed. Lots of space to roll around.” Calvin leaned over.

Owen closed the distance between them and kissed him. He pushed back the chair. Calvin straddled him without breaking their kiss.

“For the love of God. My eyes,” Lucas groaned.

Owen ignored him and slowly released Calvin from his kiss. Calvin’s lips were wet. He licked them, gaze locked with Owen.

“See? We could have been locked in my office and ignored them all.” Calvin kissed him once, gently, then stood.

Owen glanced at Lucas, who was leaning against the doorjamb.

“No. You were not trying to convince Owen to be locked in your office with you all day. That is not why we soundproofed the rooms,” Lucas growled.

“If you had a man, big brother, you would do it. So shut up.” Calvin stopped beside Lucas and glanced back at Owen. “I’m looking forward to dinner later.” He returned his attention to Lucas and poked him in the shoulder, pushing in his thumb.

“Quit it. I hate when you do that.”

“And that’s why I do it.” Calvin did it again.

Owen chuckled. He’d seen Calvin and Lucas mess with each other. It was moments like those that he’d missed with his family. He’d missed a lot, traveling for so many years. Now that he was back, he’d been enjoying the camaraderie and roughhousing with his family. Owen watched Calvin and realized that wasn’t all he had been missing. Calvin left. Lucas came closer to the desk. He stopped before it, pushed back his jacket, then slid his hands into his pocket of jeans. Lucas’s expression was serious.

“When you mentioned you wanted to date Cal, I didn’t actually think what seeing you together would mean.”

“I’m not going to back off because you’re uncomfortable with it,” Owen stated.

“That’s not what I’m saying, you lunkhead,” Lucas retorted.

"Then what?"

"I don't want either of you to get hurt. I don't want to choose between you if that happens. But just so you know, if it does...you're my best friend, but he's my brother. And I love him." Lucas paused, his face pulling into harsh, cold lines. "I will kill you if you hurt him."

The statement startled Owen, but he understood. He would do the same for any of his family. He nodded his head. Lucas inclined his head, and then his expression softened as a wide grin curled his lips.

"If you ever decide to play hide the salami in his office, I'll take the door off with a blow torch," Lucas promised.

"I told him you would." Owen laughed.

"Hmmm... I'll need to go find one. Wait. Maybe I can borrow one from Leo." Lucas nodded.

"You know he won't let you take any of his tools he uses for his art. You'd be better off asking him where to buy one," Owen retorted.

"True. I'll go ask him now, since you finally asked Calvin out. I know it's only a matter of time before he convinces you to join him in his office."

"Hey. I have self-control."

"And I know my brother. Yep. You'll be in there soon. Humph. It's a good thing we got those rooms sound-proofed." Lucas glared at him.

Owen smiled widely. Lucas left grumbling. Chuckling, Owen got to work with the photos they had already taken. He paused on the shots of the brothers and cousins joking and throwing flour at each other. He added them to the folder of pictures they could use.

"Breakfast time," Calvin said.

Owen glanced at the time. It was nine o'clock, the time he usually went to breakfast. He glanced up, watching as Calvin strode toward him. Owen stood, stretching. Calvin paused beside him and put his hand on his bare stomach, stroking. Owen lowered his hands and put his hand over his.

“Do you mind if I join you for breakfast?” Calvin asked.

“Sure.” Owen took Calvin’s hand off his stomach and led him to the door.

In the hall, he headed toward the door. Calvin pulled and stopped him. Owen looked at him in question.

“I was thinking more of a private breakfast. High in protein.” Calvin smiled.

Owen was tempted. The sound of footsteps behind him made him look back. Lucas was walking toward them from the direction of his office. There was a knowing smirk on Lucas’s lips. Owen waited until he was beside them then smacked him upside the head. He pulled Calvin with him to the door on the bookstore side that lead to the side exit, opening onto an alley way between this business and the one next door. Lucas’s laughter followed behind them.

“What was that about?” Calvin asked.

“Your brother being a know-it-all.”

“He likes to think he is.”

Owen opened the door, then stepped through. Calvin followed him out. The door was a slam lock. They walked out onto the main sidewalk of Indigo Avenue.

“Cal!” a deep, growly voice called.

Owen turned to the sound. He observed the tall, slim African-American man who approached them. The man was impeccably dressed, with his hair cut short and neatly tapered around his face. The face was finely chiseled features with dark brown eyes that blended together to make him compelling. The man moved toward them in a lazy stroll that was clearly deceptive. It was raw power and sensuality. As he got close enough, Owen realized that the man’s eyes were not brown, as he’d assumed. Instead, they were a dark grey that made them almost black. The man smiled.

“Howie.” Calvin shook the man’s hand, then gestured to Owen. “Howie... well, actually, Howard Cooper, although he prefers Howie. Howie, this is Owen Granger. I was talking about you to him earlier. He might be interested...well, his business might be interested in using your security firm,” Calvin said.

Owen shook hands with Howie. His long, slender fingers were slightly callused.

“Nice to meet you. We’re heading out for breakfast. I would like to talk with you once we get back,” Owen said.

“Nice to meet you too. I’ve heard a lot about you from Lucas. Are you looking for security for G & W Photography?”

Owen was surprised he knew the business he was referring to.

Howie spoke again. “I’ve sent a proposal to your company before, offering my services. But I was turned away, since you all already had a company you dealt with.”

“Oh. Well, I’ll check into that, but still, from what I’ve observed of what you’ve done here at Martin’s, I would definitely think we might want to talk.”

“Okay. I’ll be around somewhere. Have some books to get and pastries to eat.” Howie laughed.

“We have your favorite today. Peach scones. I had Alicia set aside a few for you,” Calvin said.

“Ah... you are too good to me. I better let you all get to it. And I have some scones calling my name.” Howie turned on his heels and returned to the bookstore entrance.

Owen turned, and Calvin joined him as they headed toward the usual place he ate breakfast. Calvin moved closer to him and brushed his fingers against his hand. Taking the hint, Owen held his hand as they walked. The area was already filled with people. A sense of rightness filled Owen as they walked. He pushed it away. It was too soon. They hadn’t even had a first date yet. Life was strange. When he’d returned home to Palmer, he’d never expected to find a man he was very interested in less than twenty-four hours later. Owen cautioned himself to take things slow.

Calvin enjoyed the cool morning breeze and walking with Owen. He felt his grip on his hand tense, then relax.

“Are you okay?” Calvin squeezed his hand.

“Yes. Just thinking of the strangeness of life,” Owen replied.

“Life can be very interesting sometimes.” Calvin could agree with the sentiment.

“I’m sorry about your parents.”

His eyes burned and throat filled. He cleared it then spoke.

“Thanks. It’s been a rough three years. I still think of them, and things I want to say to them.”

“It’ll take time. They would be proud of all that you all have done.” Owen squeezed his hand.

“Yeah, they would. Losing them and my aunt and uncle like that in the accident was just so sudden. For a long time, I wished that they hadn’t come to my graduation. To this day, I thank God that I decided to stay an extra day to get my stuff moved out, and that Lucas, Sam, and Hugo decided at the last moment to take separate cars so they could stay and help me with getting my stuff ready to move back to Palmer,” Calvin said.

“You know they would not have missed your graduation from culinary school.”

“They had already seen me graduate from business school. If I knew then what I know now, I would have told them not to come. I wouldn’t have taken that year abroad. I would have spent more time with them while I could,” Calvin said.

He thought of the excitement and happiness he’d felt that he was finally graduating from culinary school. He’d be able to take his place in their family business. Calvin had first completed his business degree then went on to culinary school. During that time, he had taken a year abroad to study from some of the best pastry chefs in the world. When he’d returned, he had one year to complete, and then he graduated. Calvin remembered how proud his parents, aunt, and uncle were for both him and Samuel. Samuel was the same age as Calvin, and they’d started their studies together. But Samuel had gone to culinary first, then did a year abroad, and then did business school. Samuel’s graduation had been the week after his. Neither of their parents had made it. On the way back to Palmer from Calvin’s graduation, his parents, aunt, and uncle had died in a car crash. They had all been together, packing up his things, when Lucas had gotten the call on his cell. It was something he would never forget.

"You can think of changing the past, but you can't do it. Live life and enjoy it, and don't second-guess yourself. There's nothing to be gained from that," Owen said in a quiet tone.

Calvin glanced at him. Owen's gaze was steady. There was a haunted look in his eyes that he'd noticed before.

"A good thing to do. But talking about it sometimes helps you heal. If you ever need to talk, I'll listen."

"Seeing the worst of humanity changes your perspective. You appreciate life even more. If I need to talk, I'll take you up on it." Owen opened the door when they arrived at their destination.

Calvin went in and spotted Andres Rich, the owner of Rich-N-Tasty Bite. He was scowling. Calvin noted that the place was busy, as usual. He went to the counter.

"What wrong, Andres?"

"Tanner is late and I have to deal with them." He gestured to the filled diner.

Calvin stifled a chuckle. Andres didn't like talking to people. That was why he stayed in the back and cooked, while Tanner, who was the manager, handled dealing with people.

"Andres, table one is complaining that their food is not as good as usual," a waitress said.

"Of course not. I'm stuck here instead of where I should be." Andres's scowl deepened.

"How late is Tanner going to be?" Calvin asked.

"That rattrap of a car broke down again. I told him he needs a new one. He's already on the bus on his way here. I could have picked him up, if he wasn't so damn stubborn," Andres gritted out.

"Okay. You go cook and I'll handle the people," Calvin said.

"Are you sure?" Andres looked grateful.

"That's what we do around here. Help each other. Now go, before I change my mind," Calvin said

“Thank you. From now on, any meal you have here is on the house,” Andres said, walking rapidly to the back. “What the hell have you done to my food?” Calvin heard him bellow as the gate swung closed.

He turned to Owen. “You can get a se-“

“Nope. I’ll help. Just tell me what to do.”

“Okay. Umm... Tanner usually handles the people sitting at the counter. So you can take those orders, while I check with the waitresses about the booths and tables.”

“This doesn’t look like such a big place from the outside. And it looks more like a restaurant than a diner,” Owen commented.

“They’re in between. The food they serve is good portions and delicious. So Andres expanded about three years ago.” Calvin blinked as he realized it was around the same time he lost his parents.

He hadn’t even thought about it. While they were working on funeral arrangements, Andres and Tanner had left the diner in the hands of the staff while they kept the bookstore and bakery running. Calvin listened absently to Andres raving at the kitchen staff. They were laughing and heckling as they usually did.

“I’ll take care of the counter,” Owen said.

Calvin focused on him then nodded. He hurried away and checked on the waitresses. Within a few minutes, everything was well. Half an hour later, Tanner rushed in, apologizing and thanking him for keeping Andres from cursing out any customers. Calvin assured him it was no problem. He glanced at the time and noted he needed to get back. Calvin left Owen there, since Andres had refused to let him leave without feeding him first. After a quick kiss, Calvin retraced his steps to the bakery. He thought of their conversation and what had happened in the diner. Owen had jumped in to help.

Calvin knew that he was in trouble. The attraction to Owen, he could handle. But now, as he got to know him, he was really getting to like and want him around. Calvin decided to keep his emotions detached. This was just a dalliance and nothing more.

Chapter Three

Later, as they went to dinner at Rhythms and Motions, a super club that was owned by the Granger's and Weber's, Calvin had to remind himself he wasn't going to get emotionally invested. Owen was only able to get them a table there because there were always a few tables reserved for family or friends viewed as family. Calvin was surprised Owen wanted to take him out to a place where his family would definitely know they were on a date. As the night wore on, each of the five owners of the club took a moment from their duties to come by. Calvin knew that the club responsibilities were broken down between the five of them. Each handled a different part of the operation – entertainment, security, food, bar, and day-to-day operations.

Calvin had been there a few times and was impressed, as always, at how classy it was without being stuffy, and how efficiently the whole operation ran. As each of the owners came by, Calvin realized they all seemed to know about them, which baffled Calvin. When Angus Granger, the last to come by and who handled the day-to-day, left their table, Calvin watched after him as he strode confidently across the room. He stopped at the various tables as he went. Calvin returned his attention to Owen.

“You told them we were coming.”

“Of course. Also told my entire family we're dating. They were very pleased. Mom even said she always hoped I would be smart and bring home one of those nice Martin men to join the family. I told her it was just a date. She said it was a start.” He snorted.

Calvin frowned. “It's a date. Not dating.”

Owen set down his mug then placed his elbow on the table as he turned slightly toward him. “Yes. A date to start the dating process. Or don't you want to go out with me again?”

Calvin put his fork down against the side of his plate then studied Owen's face. The damn man was maneuvering him into dating.

"Fine. We'll date. But I want sex. Lots of sex," Calvin said.

Owen laughed. "You have a one track mind."

"I'm horny. You've been distracting me for days." Calvin picked up his fork and started to eat again.

"Ditto. But we'll enjoy our dating and get to sex eventually."

Calvin paused in raising the tender piece of steak to his mouth. "Eventually? Just how many dates do we need to get to sex?"

"There isn't a set number. I want to get to know you that's all." Owen shrugged.

Calvin didn't reply. He continued to eat his food. They chatted and finished their scrumptious dinner. Before dessert, they went to the dance floor. Calvin moved against Owen. He moaned as Owen danced gracefully and sensually.

He wants me to wait to have him. Fat chance of that.

They continued to dance, teasing each other. After a few dances, they returned to their table and waited for their dessert. Calvin listened as Owen filled him in on his travels. Their dessert came quickly. They enjoyed it and their after dinner drink before leaving. They didn't try to pay, since Angus had already told them it was on the house. In Owen's vehicle, Calvin was grateful he didn't try for conversation. He wouldn't have made any sense. Instead, music filled the cabin as they drove toward his home. In fifteen minutes, Owen turned onto Arthur Street, then a few minutes later, pulled into the driveway of his house. Calvin exited and heard Owen do the same. Together, they went up the walk then up the steps to the porch, which was on his side of the house. The porch they had kept as a wraparound and didn't break it.

"You kept all the aesthetics of the place."

"Yeah. We kept the porch as it was. Since the house was so large, we decided to just put up a wall right in the middle to create two separate living quarters. It kept each of us with two floors, the top for bedrooms and the ground floor for kitchen, living

room, den, sunroom, and office. Come on in and see for yourself," he said unlocking the door.

"I saw Lucas's when I came for Syfy movies," Owen said.

"I know you did, but we have different tastes in décor," Calvin replied, facing him.

"Is that a way of saying, 'Come in to see my etchings'?" Owen smiled.

"If that means come to my bed, then yes," Calvin said

"Dating and getting to know each other."

Calvin scowled then smiled. "I've spoken with you for years. Anything else can happen later. But you are not leaving my house tonight. Hell, maybe not even tomorrow." Calvin reached for him and manhandled him into the house.

He closed the door then pulled Owen behind him and up the stairs.

"What about the tour? The décor?" Owen teased.

"There's the décor." He gestured.

He continued his trek up the steps and then to his bedroom at the end of the hall. Calvin yanked Owen into the room, then let go of his hand and made a grand gesture.

"And the tour. Now get naked."

"No seduction," Owen said, smiling teasingly.

Calvin frowned, walked over to the bed, then to the nightstand. He retrieved a few condoms and lube, dropping it on the bed. He returned to the foot of the bed and sat.

"Undress for me. Slowly," he demanded.

Owen's smile faded, and then his lids partially lowered over his eyes. He raised his hands to his shirt. Owen pulled apart his tie then dropped it to the floor. He unbuttoned his shirt. Calvin enjoyed the sight as his lightly furred chest came into view. Owen shrugged out of his suit coat and shirt at the same time. He kicked off his loafers, then went to work on his belt. With a slow deliberation, he opened the belt, followed by undoing the button of his slacks.

Owen paused. "Am I the only one who's showing skin?"

Calvin stood and unbuttoned his shirt as he continued to watch him. Owen lowered the zipper of his pants, then pushed them off. Calvin stopped shrugging out of his shirt, then stared at his boxers. The sight of the bright yellow material with red writing answered the question he had asked that first day he saw Owen. Calvin walked over to him. He cocked his head and read the various statements on the boxers. Calvin chuckled then glanced up at Owen. Owen was grinning. Calvin closed the space between them. He shivered as their chests touched. He rolled his shoulders and pushed off his shirt. Owen helped him. Once finished, Calvin moved his head until their lips were almost touching.

"I'm glad you're very friendly. And I want to kiss and suck all over," Calvin said, referring to the saying on the boxers.

"Don't forget the one that said petting is appreciated," Owen said.

"I didn't see one that said that," Calvin said

Owen turned around. Calvin looked down at the back of his boxers. He knelt to get a better view. He traced his finger over the words, then over the ones that said 'Be gentle and use your teeth'. Calvin reached for the top of the boxers and pulled them off. Owen lifted his feet out of them. He went to turn. Calvin stilled him. He leaned closer and inhaled the musky scent of man. Calvin pressed his nose against the small of Owen's back.

He kissed the area. Owen moaned and pressed back. Calvin licked along the small of his back then went down along the firm globes of his butt. He repeated the lick and kisses on the right, then on the left. He swirled his tongue back up, and then he opened his mouth and bit his butt cheek gently.

"Calvin." Owen's raspy voice echoed in the room.

Calvin shifted his head back then turned Owen around. At the first sight of his cock, Calvin licked his lips. He was thick and long. Calvin leaned forward and licked along the head of his shaft. The sweet taste of pre-cum filled his mouth. Owen's hips snapped forward. Calvin pulled his head back. Owen's hands gripped his head.

"Please," Owen whispered.

Calvin looked up the line of his body. Owen's eyes were intense, and he was biting his lips. Calvin leaned forward and opened his mouth. Owen groaned, then moved his hips forward, guiding Calvin's head. Calvin accepted his cock into his mouth. He gripped Owen's hips and pulled on him. Owen resisted.

Calvin moved back and growled, "Fuck my mouth."

Calvin opened his mouth wide. Owen inhaled harshly, then thrust forward. Calvin took all of his hard flesh. Owen fucked his mouth slowly, moving in and out in deep thrusts. Calvin worked his mouth, suckling his erection. The taste of Owen filled Calvin's mouth.

"*Calvin,*" Owen said.

Calvin worked his jaw, moving his head faster, bobbing on his erection. Owen snapped his hips back and forth, making random sounds as he thrust. Harsh grunts sounded from him, and then he stiffened. Calvin gripped his hips, digging his nails in. Owen moaned, then shook as he came. Calvin sucked it all in. Slowly, he swirled his tongue, then pulled off Owen's cock. Owen gripped his hair and pulled him up. Calvin rose. Owen closed his lips over Calvin's, stroking his tongue deeply into his mouth. The hungry, demanding sounds he made filled Calvin's mouth. Owen withdrew and nipped his lip. Calvin licked across the flesh, then, holding Owen's hips, he stepped back. Owen followed him as he moved them back. When he thought he was close enough to the bed, he stopped. He turned them until Owen's back was to the mattress. Calvin kissed him urgently then moved him back.

Owen sat on the bed then scooted back until he rested against the pillows. He gripped his revived erection and tugged on it. Calvin watched as he shucked the rest of his clothing. He pulled off Owen's socks, then placed a knee on the bed. He crawled up between Owen's spread legs. He stopped. Owen handed him the protection and lube. Calvin glanced at the muscular man spread before him. He debated a moment what he wanted more. In a moment, he knew. He coated his fingers with lube, then tapped Owen's upper thigh. Owen bent his knee then raised his ass up. Calvin smiled that he was in agreement. He slid his hand between the globes of his ass, then deeper. Owen

shifted, giving him more space. He touched Owen's puckered skin then pushed in a finger. Owen hissed. Calvin paused as Owen gripped his digit. He was tight. Calvin watched him narrowly.

"It's been a while. But don't go slow. I like that slight bite of pain," Owen said.

Calvin coated his fingers again, then touched him again. He pushed in with one, then two, quickly getting him ready. Each time Owen gripped his fingers, his cock throbbed with the need to be inside. Finally, he pulled out his fingers, then sheathed his erection, put on slick, then lined up with the heated place he wanted to be in.

"It'd probably be easier if you were on your knees. But I want to see your face," Calvin stated.

"Me too. Now fuck me," Owen demanded, moving downward.

Calvin stroked forward. He moaned as the head of his erection popped in past that ring of muscles, and then he thrust deep. He leaned over, bracing his arms over Owen's head. Owen gripped his arms, grunting. Calvin stilled.

Owen bared his teeth. "Move, damn it."

He shifted his body, moving against Calvin's cock. Calvin stroked fast and urgently. Owen growled and moaned, moving with him. They set up a wild, hard and fast rhythm. Calvin blinked as sweat flowed into his eyes. Owen's grip on his arms moved up to his shoulders, and he yanked him down onto his big chest. Owen kissed him. Calvin rocked his hips, thrusting into him. Owen's moan vibrated in his mouth. Calvin grunted as he moved faster and faster. Owen tightened around his shaft, then jerked. Calvin thrust deep, then came, joining him. Owen's seed was wet between them. Owen gentled his kiss, then slowly pulled out his tongue. His hands stroked down Calvin's sweat-slickened back. Calvin kissed him lazily then moved to pull out. Owen's hole gripped him, and then he relaxed. Calvin shifted, taking care of the condom and disposing of it. He rested on his side, facing Owen. Owen matched him.

"Is that all you got?" Owen's smile was challenging.

Calvin narrowed his eyes and retorted, "Give me a sec and I'll take you again."

"I don't need a sec, and I'm ready to take you." Owen smirked.

His cock twitched at the thought. Owen turned, reaching for a condom and lube. He quickly readied himself, then returned to Calvin. He rolled him below his bigger frame then coated his fingers. Calvin groaned as he touched him and readied him for his penetration. In moments, Owen pushed in. Calvin locked gazes with him as he took him.

Owen stared at Calvin as he thrust. He moaned at the tight passage around his cock. Calvin's own sound echoed his. Owen thrust slow and easy. The edge was off and now he wanted to take his time and drive Calvin crazy.

"Faster," Calvin demanded, raising his legs and gripping Owen.

Owen ignored him and moved as he wanted to. As he stroked slowly, Calvin's demands for faster rose in a litany of sound. Owen didn't increase his motions. Eventually, Calvin's sounds became incompressible. His legs tightened and released around him as Owen thrust into his hole. He rested his body over Calvin's, blanketing his frame. Calvin's arms came around his neck, holding him as they moved against each other. Between them, Calvin's newly hard shaft was pressed between their bodies shifting against each other. Calvin's breath hitched with each motion. His pre-cum dampened their flesh.

"God. You...come on. Damn you, Owen. Move faster!" Calvin roared.

Owen chuckled and deliberately stilled. Calvin's lids opened, and his eyes were furious.

"If you don't want to finish then get off me so I can jerk off," Calvin said.

"Shh...silence. Be still with me. Breathe with me." Owen started to breathe slow and deep.

He didn't think Calvin would. Then he sighed and did as Owen requested. In slow increments, Owen felt his tension ease as they came into sync. Then suddenly, Owen shuddered and came. Calvin gasped and joined him. Calvin's shocked gaze met his. Owen grinned. Calvin kissed him, then spoke.

"I'm not letting you out of bed until Tuesday," he promised.

"The day went to two, huh? Don't you have to work Monday?" Owen asked.

"Nope. I have a scheduled day off. And you're staying with me." It wasn't a question.

Owen chuckled and kissed him.

* * * * *

Owen stretched then relaxed back in his chair. He thought about the last few weeks. Since that first night with Calvin, they had gotten into a pattern. As promised, Calvin hadn't let him out of bed until Tuesday. He'd called his cousin and let him know he wouldn't be at Martin's to work that day. When they had returned on Tuesday, they had been ribbed good-naturedly about it. Owen had taken it in stride--even Lucas's constant goading that he would give in and be convinced by Calvin to get wicked in his office. So far, he hadn't, but just yesterday, he'd almost given in and dragged Calvin there. The man was a tease.

They'd spent so much time together in the last few weeks, going to various places and then, of course, ending up at Calvin's house in bed. He'd even started to keep clothing at his house, since he was there more than the apartment he was using temporarily at his parents'. His parents had even commented that he would be moving in with Calvin soon. Hell, all of his family accepted that they were already a couple. Owen had found himself almost buying into it, too. As the time passed, he had to keep reminding himself what he had decided all those weeks ago. It was too soon. He needed to take it slow. Yes, he enjoyed being around Calvin, and they had fun, but he didn't want to rush into the couple thing so fast. Owen recalled what Reagan had said about that look the family got when they were ready to commit to the person who was 'the one.'

Standing, he made his way to the door, then down the hall. He passed the kitchen and spotted Calvin working. Calvin didn't see him; he was singing and dancing

as he made pastries. Owen smiled. They had finished taking the pictures many weeks ago and given them to the Martin's. Since he spent the night at Calvin's, Owen had gotten used to coming with him to the bakery and keeping him company as he worked. Then at about eight o'clock, Calvin would take a break and go with him to Rich-N-Tasty Bite to have breakfast before he headed to his own workday at G & W Photography.

Since he only handled studio sessions, he could set his schedule as he wanted. He'd forgotten how shooting portraits could be both fun and stressful. And he'd also been doing some ad shoots and promo shoots. There had been an influx of business from the businesses in this area. His calendar was filled before he even decided to let people know he was available. Owen knew it was because of Calvin. He'd been telling everyone he knew about the fabulous photos. And by word of mouth, Owen was booked up for months already. Owen had noticed from the beginning that Calvin had a knack for matching up people with others they might not even know they needed to get something done. If you did good work for him, Calvin would make sure others knew it and get you business.

He'd seen it firsthand. Although the site wasn't up yet, the promos using their photos had started appearing. Eli had used their shots and created a fabulous eye-catching promo for the shop. After they appeared, there had been a demand for them to do more of that sort of work. With Owen and Reagan being newly back, they, along with their partners, had agreed to do those sorts of shoots. Owen continued to the bathroom. He entered the spacious room, leaving the door open as he went to the mirror. He studied his face. He couldn't see what Reagan had mentioned.

"You should have gone to the bathroom in my office. That way we wouldn't be disturbed," Calvin said.

A wide grin spread across Owen's face. He studied his face, and then his eyes widened. There was the look he had seen so often on his parents, aunts, uncles and any of his cousins and siblings who had found 'the one'.

“Then again, no one will be here for at least another hour. Well, Sam will be in at the bookstore side, but he’s working on putting out a shipment, so we have time for a quickie.”

Owen heard the sound of the door closing. He turned to face Calvin and saw him turn the lock on the bathroom door. Owen shook his head.

“You are obsessed with tempting me to do it at your place of work.”

“It’s a fantasy of mine to have you over my desk. But this will do for starters.” Calvin stalked toward him.

Owen started to say no then shook his head. When Calvin reached him, he grabbed him, then turned, pushing him down against the counter.

“I’ll have you,” he said.

Calvin wiggled his ass then said, “Come on, then. Snap to it.”

Owen chuckled, and reached into the front pocket of Calvin’s jeans. He knew from experience that he would have something there for them to use. He felt the condom and small tube. Owen pulled them out then said, “You must have an unending supply of lube packets and condoms stashed here.”

“I stocked up when I started getting lucky on a regular basis. Now cut the chatter. This is supposed to be a quickie.”

Owen did as he bid. He opened Calvin’s pants while kissing the back of his neck. He pushed them down, as well as his briefs, enough to bare his ass. Owen quickly got him ready, then himself, donning the condom and using the last of the lube in the packet. Then he pushed into Calvin’s welcoming heat. Owen placed his arm under Calvin’s, then across his chest to his shoulder. He held Calvin as he thrust. Owen watched Calvin in the mirror as he stroked in and out of his body. Calvin gripped his forearm with one hand and slid the other back along his hip. Owen hissed as Calvin gripped his hip tightly. They moved together urgently.

Calvin’s face was slightly flushed and his breathing ragged. Owen moved his hand and gripped his cock. He ran his thumb over the spongy head. In the glass, Owen watched as he fondled Calvin’s cock. Calvin’s hips snapped forward into his grip, then

back against his cock. Owen's sac went tight, and then he grunted as he came. Calvin's semen spilled over his hand. Owen continued to move inside of his passage and tug on his erection. Calvin turned his head. Owen lowered his head and kissed him. Their tongues dueled lazily as they slowed their movements.

A pounding on the bathroom door startled them. Calvin pulled away from their kiss and Owen glanced at the locked door.

"I'm getting the blow torch!" Lucas called cheerfully.

"Ass!" Calvin called then returned his attention to Owen. "Don't mind him. He's jealous." Calvin raised his voice.

"You have five minutes and then I'm coming in," Lucas said.

"Spoilsport!" Calvin called then said to Owen. "Ignore him. He doesn't have a blow torch."

Owen chuckled and stepped back. He removed the protection then wrapped it up and disposed of it. He went to pull up his boxers and pants. Calvin helped him and ran his hand down the front of his boxers.

"You look very good in these pink boxers. I love the various rainbow colored gems on them. I'll have to count them. Later." Calvin kissed him then finished setting his clothing back to right.

Owen returned the favor. They went to the door.

Calvin opened it then demanded, "Where the hell did you get that?"

Owen stared, shocked, as Lucas wielded the nozzle of a blow torch. He had said he would get one, but they hadn't thought he would actually do it. Owen saw what looked like a tank on wheels beside him.

"Leo got it for me."

"Shit. You all are crazy. And that's a welding torch, you idiot."

"I know what it is. But I think blow torch sounds much better," Lucas said.

"Do you even know how to use it?" Owen asked, chuckling.

Lucas looked offended. "Of course. Leo showed me. Want me to show you?"

"Don't encourage him." Calvin reached for the hose Lucas held.

Lucas held it away and stepped back. Calvin moved over to him. Before Owen could step in, Calvin punched Lucas in the stomach. Lucas doubled over and wheezed. Calvin took the hose then wheeled the tank down the hall.

“Always protect your middle!” Calvin called back smugly.

Owen watched as Calvin went down the hall with the blow torch. Well, welding torch. He went into the kitchen.

“He has quite a punch. I can’t even be mad. I taught him that,” Lucas said in a strained voice.

Owen focused back on him. “You’ve gotten even nuttier.”

“There’s nothing nutty about having a blow torch,” Lucas stated.

They strolled toward the kitchen. Owen entered with Lucas.

“Step away from the welding torch!” Calvin roared.

Owen blinked as he bit his lip, trying not to laugh. Hugo jumped, jerking his hand back from touching the hose of the torch. He crossed his arms above his chest.

“I was just going touch it. A blow torch – that’s cool. Lucas, I want to try it out,” Hugo said.

“Welding torch. None of you even know the difference. And no one is using it. What are you doing, Hugo?” Calvin asked.

“Texting Sam. He has to see this.”

“Oh God. No. Here Owen. Take this with you out the back. I’ll meet you in a minute to go to breakfast,” Calvin said.

Owen was pleased Calvin trusted him with it. He stepped forward and took it.

“Why does he get to touch it?”

“Because he isn’t a child, like you all are, and won’t use it,” Calvin said.

Owen wheeled it to the door from the kitchen into the back hall. He paused by the door and looked back at the three men who were bickering about what right Calvin had to take away the blow torch. Owen noted that Hugo was texting as he was interjecting his points. Owen smiled fondly at their antics. He focused on Calvin and smiled. Then it dawned on him. Owen jerked, startled, as he realized that he didn’t

want slow. He wanted Calvin for his own. He wanted it all. Owen turned and made his way out the door and into the back hall. He strode to the back door. Now he just had to convince Calvin that they would be good as a couple and partners in life.

Owen exited the building and made his way to his SUV.

“Owen. Psssttt...over here.” Owen turned and spotted the impeccably groomed head peeking around the car.

He moved over to Samuel. Samuel had a gleam in his eyes he had only seen in the Martin brothers and Hugo. Up until now, he didn't even think Samuel knew how to get into trouble.

“We're rendezvousing down behind Rich-N-Tasty Bite. We'll go to the back, and Andres will meet us there. Lucas and Hugo will be along when they get someone to distract Calvin.”

“I can't. Calvin said-”

“Come on, man. It's a blow torch. He doesn't need to know.”

“Well, he did say he'd meet me for breakfast at Rich-N-Tasty Bite.” Owen looked at the hose and canister.

“See? Now come on, before he comes outside. He's a party-pooper,” Samuel said.

Owen followed him as he headed for the walk-through gate. “Why are we going to the back?”

“Tanner would call Calvin to tattle on us. So we have to be devious about it.”

“Maybe this isn't such a good idea.” Owen stopped.

“Uh-uh. No backing out. Calvin said he'd meet you for breakfast,” Sam urged.

Owen continued with him. At Rich-N-Tasty Bite, Andres met them. He had some pots.

“These are some old pots we're getting rid of. I've used one of these before. Let's have a go.” Andres sparked it up.

Sam laughed. Owen watched the bright flame. Andres lowered it and started cutting through the pots. Soon Hugo and Lucas joined them. They all took a turn cutting through the pots.

“Owen, I thought I could trust you.” Calvin’s voice cut through the fun.

Owen glanced at him. He and Tanner stood a few paces away from them.

“Blabber mouth.” Sam walked rapidly back to the shop.

The rest of the men followed him. Andres whistled as he went to the back door of the diner and went inside. Tanner followed him. Calvin moved toward Owen.

“It was Sam. He looked so devilish and he’s never looked like that. There’s something about him that made me do it,” Owen said.

“That’s why I told you to take it and leave. When Sam gets involved in the mayhem, he has a way of making you do things you usually wouldn’t.”

“It’s that look in his eye,” Owen said.

“You’ve been Sammied.” Calvin laughed.

“Duped, you mean. They all deserted me. The traitors,” Owen said.

“That’s what they do. Do the damage, then leave the duped to the fall out,” Calvin said.

“You’re not really mad at me, are you?” Owen asked.

“I’ll have to think about it,” Calvin said.

“Come on. It was strangely compelling watching it cut through stuff.”

“I know.”

“You’ve done it before?”

“Yep. I’ve gone by when Leo was working, and he let me have a go at it. Since you were so busy out here with this, we don’t have time for breakfast, or you’ll be late for your first shoot.” Calvin took the welding torch and wheeled it back toward where his car was parked.

Owen followed and took the handle. He put his arm over Calvin’s shoulder as they walked. In the parking area, he helped Calvin put the torch in his vehicle. Then they went to Owen’s.

Owen faced him then spoke. "I prefer being Calvinized. I want you in my life for a long time to come."

"That won't get you out of trouble. Now go to work." Calvin chuckled then kissed him.

Owen got in his SUV, then honked his horn and got on his way. As he drove to work, he planned how to convince Calvin what he said was true.

Chapter Four

“Are you ready to go?” Owen asked.

“Let me just check with Dillon to make sure everything is okay,” Calvin said.

It was Hugo’s day off, and he and Dillon Williams, the other pastry chef, had been working hard all day to make sure they had everything they needed done for the day. With the way business had picked up, they would have to hire another pastry chef. As he spoke with Dillon, he absently kept Owen in his view. He couldn’t put his finger on when, but things between them had changed. Maybe it was just his imagination, but he felt closer to Owen than any other man he had ever dated. Finished, he joined Owen and they left. In a few moments, they were in Owen’s car. Since Owen came with him to work and returned with him when he went home, they had started taking one car.

Calvin relaxed in the passenger seat as Owen drove. The silence between them was companionable. The drive went fast and soon they were pulling into his driveway. They exited the vehicle and met at the hood.

“Later, I’m making sandwiches for dinner. Any preference on what you want on it?” Owen asked.

“You know what I like.” Calvin shrugged.

He let them in then headed up the stairs to get into something comfortable. In moments, he had changed and was descending the stairs carrying a change of clothing for Owen. Calvin made a right into the living room. He paused and smiled at Owen, who was sprawled in front of the TV watching a Syfy movie. He walked over to Owen and handed him the clothes. Owen took them and stood. Calvin sat on the couch.

“What’s the movie theme today?”

“Syfy Saturday is all disaster movies today,” Owen said, his eyes on the screen as he undressed.

Calvin watched Owen's broad chest as he covered it with a sleeveless tee-shirt. Calvin's gaze dropped to the boxers. He shook his head at the neon green color and the picture depicting various sexual acts. One image in particular caught his attention, and he leaned sideways to get a better view. He touched the back of Owen's leg to stop him from pulling on his sweats. Owen stilled. Calvin looked up at him just as Owen glanced back at him in question.

"I want to do that one," he said huskily.

Owen's brow furrowed as he twisted to try to see. Calvin turned him and looked at the front of his boxers, then spotted the same image again. He tapped the image on the boxer on Owen's left upper thigh. Owen sat, studied it, then glanced at him sharply. A slow, devilish grin curled his lips, and then he turned and opened the drawer of the side table. He took out a tube and condom, then turned back to face Calvin. Calvin reached up and took them out of his hands.

"You'll do it so you can see your movie." Calvin smirked.

"If I can focus on the movie, you're not doing it right," Owen retorted.

"You better focus. There will be a quiz later," Calvin quipped.

Owen snorted then said, "The guys are coming over for the new Syfy Saturday movie."

Calvin rolled his eyes. Somehow, it had become a weekly tradition that Saturday night, whether there was a new Syfy movie or not, they came together to watch. There was even a schedule worked out to rotate between their various homes, as well as a list of who was bringing either snacks, beer, other drinks, or dessert. Everyone came to the home of whoever was hosting by eight-thirty. Calvin had expected Owen, Lucas, Reagan, Leo, and even his cousins to be involved, but they had also gained more people from Owen's family, as well as Andres and Tanner. The amount of people depended on who could attend. Not everyone came for the Syfy movie. Those who weren't into the movies as some die-hard snarkers or watchers usually ended up playing cards, video games, or something else in another room.

Calvin glanced at the clock hanging over the TV, and then to Owen. "Barely enough time."

"Only you would think almost four hours isn't enough time." Owen chuckled.

"Humph. I would think you would think so, too, since I want a chance to do the same."

Owen sobered, then glanced at the clock. "You're right. Let's get to it so we don't waste precious time."

"I knew you would see things my way."

Owen pushed off his boxers. Calvin stood and took off his own sweats. Owen stepped close to him and kissed him, then took off his shirt.

"Wh--"

Owen cut him off with another kiss then said, "I want to feel your skin against me."

"Such a romantic," Calvin teased.

"Hush your trap and get to it," Owen said.

Calvin laughed and sat again. Owen turned, standing before him. Calvin coated his fingers with lube, then touched his butt cheek. He slid his fingers between the globes and touched him. Calvin bit on the left rounded globe as he slid into the tight cavern. Owen rocked back on his fingers, a soft moan coming from him. Calvin continued to bite his cheek as he readied him.

"I want what the boxers depicted," Owen's breathless voice said.

"Hmmm...you're still coherent enough to use big words. We'll have to work on that." Calvin kissed his ass then sat back.

He slid the condom on his hard shaft and leaned against the back cushions of the couch.

"Come here."

Owen stepped back. Calvin steadied him then pulled him down. Owen squatted. Holding his cock, Calvin lined up then pulled Owen down. Owen hissed, that sound now familiar whenever Calvin took him. Calvin pulled him down hard, knowing Owen

loved the first burn of penetration. A loud groan sounded from Owen. Calvin slid his hands up his chest and held him back against him, kissing the side of his neck. Owen dropped his head back on his shoulder. Calvin rocked into his body.

“You’re supposed to watch the movie. There’s a quiz.”

“You’ll give me an A,” Owen moaned.

“You’ll have to work for it.” Calvin thrust up.

Owen slid his hand behind his head and pushed back. He tightened around Calvin’s embedded member, making Calvin groan. Owen turned his head toward him. Calvin shifted his head to meet his lips. He continued to move as they kissed hungrily. Their tongues dueled, wild and deep, the same way he moved inside of Owen. Calvin slid one hand down the plane of Owen’s chest, then over his stomach before sliding his fingers through the hair of his groin. He moved his hand and stoked him from the base up. Calvin ran his thumb over the spongy head of Owen’s cock. The pre-cum coated his finger. He moved his hand in the same fast motions as he rocked into Owen’s passage. Owen tightened around him in time with each movement. Calvin pulled away from the kiss, groaning.

“Ummm...yes...hard... come on...yes...” Owen panted.

Calvin grunted as he moved faster, increasing the motion of his hand, too. Owen undulated his hips, making sounds that rose in accompaniment to each movement. Calvin stiffened as he came. He burrowed his face into the side of Owen’s neck and bit down.

“Calvin!” Owen jerked then shook as he came.

His seed spilled over Calvin’s fingers as he continued to jerk him off. Owen blew out a breath, then slumped back against his chest. Calvin held him, gently kissing where he had bitten him. Owen shivered then turned his head. Meeting him, Calvin kissed him, slow and deep. They separated. Calvin stared into those olive green eyes that had become dear to him. He went still as shock filled him.

Owen frowned. “What’s wrong?”

Calvin shook it off. “Nothing.”

Owen's look clearly said he didn't believe him. Calvin forced a smile onto his lips.

"I'm wondering why you're still sitting there. Time is a ticking."

"You're a horn dog." Owen laughed and kissed him.

Calvin returned it. Owen was very right. He was a horn dog--one who had found the man he wanted to claim him. Calvin didn't know what to do. He didn't even know how Owen felt. Immediately, he realized he did. If Owen had wanted more than what they had, he would say so. One of the things he enjoyed about Owen was his bluntness. That Owen hadn't said he wanted beyond what they had was his answer.

Can I accept just this? Calvin wondered.

Two weeks later, he still didn't have an answer. He and Owen were still spending all their free time together. And he still had no idea where they were going. He'd thought of asking him outright many times, but hadn't. Hell, he didn't know if he wanted to know the answer. Calvin pounded the dough he was working.

"What did it ever do to you?" Hugo asked.

"What?" He glanced up.

Hugo sat on a stool across from him, working on decorating a cake. Hugo put down the flower he was painting and raised his gaze. His steel blue-grey eyes were steady as he waited. Calvin lowered his gaze, going back to kneading the dough. Although Hugo didn't say anything, Calvin could feel him watching him. Calvin continued to ignore him. As the silence lengthened, Calvin raised his head. Hugo was indeed watching him.

"Damn it. I hate when you do that. Stop," he snapped.

Hugo arched an eyebrow and kept up his steady regard.

"Christ. Stop looking at me, and I'll tell you." Calvin said.

"You held out for forty seconds against the Hugo stare. You have the new record," Hugo said.

"How the hell do you do that? You just look at people with that whatever look it is and get them to talk. I hate it." Calvin glared.

Hugo grinned. "It's a gift. Now stop stalling and spill."

Calvin sighed then said, "I think I care more for Owen than he does about me."

"Shit. I thought something was really wrong with you. Or at least it was something important." Hugo picked up the flower and brush again.

"There is something wrong. I hate feeling this way. And this is important to me. You asked to know and now you're brushing it off," Calvin gritted out.

Hugo raised his face. His expression was startled. Hugo studied Calvin then put the flower back down.

"You're serious."

"Would I be so out of sorts if I wasn't?"

"Is this why it's silent as a tomb in here? You didn't put on any music today."

"You could have put on yours." Calvin shrugged.

"Wait. Something is really wrong with you. We never break the rule of whoever opens picks the music," Hugo said.

Calvin pulled up a stool and sat, putting his flour-covered hands under his chin.

"Why didn't Owen come in with you this morning?" Hugo asked.

"He had an early morning shoot and had to leave before I did," Calvin said.

"Okay. And did you all have a fight or something?" Hugo asked.

"No."

"Then why do you think he doesn't feel the same as you?"

"He hasn't said anything." Calvin shifted on the stool.

"Have you?"

"That's not the point," Calvin said.

"It exactly is. You're being typical Calvin." Hugo shook his head.

"What? What do you mean by that?"

Hugo ignored him and pulled out his cell. He typed something, muttering so fast Calvin couldn't understand what he was saying.

"I'm talking with you, and you're texting."

"I'm getting some help to explain why you're being an ass." Hugo put down his cell.

"Wh--"

"What is this about you thinking Owen doesn't care? Did he hurt you? I warned him I would kill him." Lucas strode in.

"You didn't read the whole text. Hugo wants us to tell Calvin what he typically does when he's faced with the idea of feelings or saying something first. Now calm down and be the oldest. Tell him," Samuel said.

Lucas leaned against the counter, close to where Calvin sat. Lucas studied him then shook his head.

"Stop being a girl and man up."

"That is an insult to girls everywhere. I know a lot of them who could kick your ass. And many of them work here. Don't make me tell them when they come in that you're insulting their gender," Calvin warned.

"And there's the deflection," Samuel said.

"What is this, gang up on Calvin day?" he demanded.

"Then the combative attitude. Now we have to wait for the next one," Hugo said.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Calvin crossed his arms over his chest.

"And there it is. The denial. Christ, Calvin. You are such a typical Cro-Magnon man. You hate talking about anything resembling feelings," Lucas said.

"As if any of you are any better."

"We are sure as hell better at it than you." Samuel came around the table and leaned on his other side.

"You are all asses."

"Before we get to the cursing and storming out without listening, let's cut to the chase. Man up and tell Owen how you feel. Then see what happens." Lucas braced his hands on the counter.

"I'm not saying anything first."

“Christ! You’re a stubborn bastard. It always has to be your way. Who was the one to make the first move?” Samuel said.

“Owen, bu-“

“Who, from the beginning, wanted it to be about sex?”

“Me, but-“

“Who, now knowing they want more than sex, is being an idiot and, instead of just saying so, is finding an excuse to push the other person away?”

“Me.” Calvin scowled as he realized what he’d said.

Samuel smirked. Lucas and Hugo clapped.

“Bravo, bravo. Well done!” Hugo called.

“He really is a genius at getting people to admit things. He should have been a lawyer,” Lucas said.

“Zip it, peanut gallery.” Calvin glared at the men then focused on Samuel. “People think you’re this reserved, quiet, and nice man, but you’re really an opinionated know-it-all.” Calvin poked at his shoulder.

“It’s not my problem how people see me. And you know that I’m rarely wrong.”

And that was the aggravating thing. Samuel was correct. Calvin had been working out ways to push Owen away. Calvin stood, turned to the sink, washed off his hands, and wiped off his face. He faced the men again. Lucas and Hugo had joined Samuel, leaning against the table.

“Fine. Later, when I see Owen, I’ll be an adult and talk with him. Now, I need to get back to work so we can have stuff ready for the customers today.”

“No need to wait for later. Go now. We can cover for you until you get back,” Hugo said.

“But I can’t,” Calvin said.

“You can. If you wait, you’ll change your mind, and then we’ll have to listen to you whine. I hate whiners. They should invent a pill to stop people from doing it.”

Lucas made a shooing motion with his hands.

Samuel went and opened the door leading to the back hall. He made a gesture to leave.

“Meddling pains in the ass. If I didn’t love you all, I would really want to knock you all out.” Calvin walked to the door.

“Aww... we love you, too.” Lucas made rude kissing noises.

Hugo and Samuel echoed the statement as well as sounds. Calvin laughed as he went down the hall and to the exit. In his vehicle, Calvin didn’t think about what he was about to do. He got on his way and drove toward Tybalt Avenue. In twenty minutes, he turned into the parking lot of G & W Photography. He found a space then got out of his vehicle, closing the door behind him. As he walked toward the four-story building that housed G & W Photography, Calvin was again impressed with the layout of the place.

The partners of the business were situated one each on each side of the building from floor one through three. Their parents, who had passed on the business, shared an office on the second floor. The areas the partners used for their own consisted of studio, office, storage area, mini-conference room, and dark room. The two partners on each floor shared a larger conference room, kitchen, and an assistant. The fourth floor was for the assistant photographers, and had a massive studio for more complex shoots. The area around G & W Photography was very nicely landscaped, so there were plenty of places to take outside pictures. From the front, he couldn’t see the expansive back section, which was like a garden oasis, complete with gazebo. Calvin approached the glass door with the G & W Photography logo. He pulled it open and went in.

“Calvin. How are you?” Jackie, the receptionist, greeted him warmly.

She knew him from his previous visits here and the closeness he had with the family.

“I’m good. I wanted to see Owen,” he said.

“I heard you two were an item. He’s still with his early shoot. You can go on up and wait for him. Do you know where it is?” Jackie smiled.

“Yes. He told me,” Calvin said.

He made his way to the bank of elevators and pressed the button. It came quickly. When he entered, he pressed three. The elevator rose silently then opened. Calvin stepped out then turned toward Owen's office. He strolled past the assistant and waved as he went. She waved back and returned her attention to her computer. Approaching Owen's office, Calvin slowed, then bypassed it and continued on to the studio. If the door was closed, he wouldn't interrupt. He had learned that from visiting with the others before. Some clients didn't mind someone watching their shoot, while others did. Thus the closed door as a signal. He noticed that the door was open. Calvin stopped outside and peeked in. He spotted Owen kneeling on the floor, his camera flashing. Calvin stiffened as he noticed the model Owen was taking pictures of.

"I can't believe I was duped into doing this." The voice was deep and throaty.

"You're doing great, Fergus," Owen replied.

Calvin studied Fergus, who was in what looked like oil-stained overalls that were unbuttoned to below his belly button. The chest that showed was all ridges and lines of muscle. The overalls were cut off mid-thigh and showed those muscular legs off. The man shifted, making the tight overalls look like they would rip off his body any moment.

"Sit," Owen ordered.

Fergus scowled. "I'm usually the one who says that. Usually, it's to Bunny, my dog."

Owen glanced up, then laughed. "You named your dog Bunny?"

"Yeah. He's a big sucker and doesn't fit his name at all." Fergus joined him in a deep belly laugh.

Fergus sat, pulling up one knee and putting his hands around it. "How do you want me to pose?"

"That's fine. Just be natural." Owen continued to take pictures.

Fergus shrugged then stayed as he was. "I don't know why I have to do this calendar."

“Stop your bitching. You lost the bet with Andrew, and now you both are going to have calendars to give out for your business. Live with it,” Owen replied.

“I didn’t think he would get anyone else in the garage to do a beefcake calendar. The damn ingrates did it just to make me do it. Although they won’t say it, I know Andre told them about the bet. You just want the business. So of course you would agree with him,” Fergus retorted.

“Nah. I’m doing this gratis,” Owen said.

Calvin’s eyes narrowed as he heard that.

Fergus sat forward and asked, “Why?”

Calvin listened closely. He wanted to know why, too.

“Your brother is giving me a free lifetime membership to McMurray Sports Center,” Owen replied.

“He is? Just for some pictures for a calendar,” Fergus said in disbelief.

Calvin felt the same way. He eased closer to hear this response.

“For doing the calendar every year, as well as pictures for promotional stuff for the sports center,” Owen said.

“And that’s it,” Fergus said.

Owen paused. “What else would there be?”

Fergus leaned back, putting his hands behind him and lowering his legs.

“Nothing at all. Well, I’m only doing the calendar this one time, no matter if Andrew thinks he will win the bet to get me to do it every year, too. No way will Andrew win the bet that people would actually want calendars of me or the men who work in my garage.”

“With you on the cover, I would prepare to lose the bet. If you need me to do the calendar every year, we’ll set up something, prices and so on.”

“The calendar won’t happen after this year. But I do want some promotional pictures taken of the garage. Maybe we can discuss it over dinner.” Fergus studied Owen intently.

Calvin could see the interest on his face from where he stood. Hell, he heard it in his voice. Owen kept shooting pictures. Calvin waited for him to say no.

“Sure. We’ll figure out a date,” Owen said.

“That would be very good.”

Calvin frowned and stepped back. He turned on his heels and strode back the way he had come. In his fury, he passed the secretary without any acknowledgement. He punched the elevator button and clenched his fist as he waited. Impatiently, he went to the stairs. He ran down them and burst into the lobby, headed for the door.

“Calvin!” Jackie called.

He didn’t stop. Calvin went to his vehicle and got in. He drove back to work without even remembering it. In moments, he was inside, then back at his worktable.

“How’d it go?” Hugo asked.

Calvin washed his hands silently, then retrieved a tub of dough. He dumped it on the table and started to knead.

“That well, huh?” Hugo asked.

Calvin ignored him. He pounded the dough, imagining it was Owen’s face. Then Fergus. He thought of pummeling both of them.

Owen exited his vehicle and rolled his shoulders. It had been a long day. He saw Calvin’s car. He strode up the walkway to Calvin’s front door. Owen rubbed the back of his neck. He had stopped at the bakery to meet up with Calvin so they could go home together, but he had already left. Owen had thought Calvin was the one who was closing tonight. He went up the steps, across the porch, then to the door. Owen pressed the bell and waited. He frowned when it went unanswered. Owen pressed the bell again. The door opened and Calvin walked away. Owen followed him. Calvin went into the living room. He sprawled on the couch and flipped through the TV channels. Owen watched him, wondering what was going on.

He spotted his usual clothing he wore once they were home. Owen undressed. He frowned when there was no comment or touch from Calvin on his boxers. He usually did both. Owen pulled on his sweats and tee-shirt. He put his other clothing over a chair then sat beside Calvin.

“What’s wrong?” Owen asked.

“Nothing. Since I was here early, I made dinner. It’s in the microwave.” Calvin didn’t look away from the TV.

“Jackie mentioned you came by. But why didn’t you come to the studio to see me?” Owen asked.

Calvin didn’t reply. Owen debated if he should push. He decided not to and stood, going into the kitchen. He found the food and heated it up. Once it was hot, he sat at the island then started to eat. It wasn’t until he took a bite that he realized he hadn’t gotten a drink. He went to stand.

Calvin walked in and went to the fridge. “I’ve got it.”

Owen sat back down and picked up his fork. “Thanks.”

“You always forget to get a drink. I also know you enjoy cream soda, and I buy it because you do. I know a lot of things about you,” Calvin said.

He walked over to him and slammed down the can of soda. Owen watched the can, then looked up at Calvin. Calvin leaned against the counter close to him.

“Like I know you mutter and don’t know it. That you like root beer soda. And you forget to get napkins until you need them. So what’s your point?”

“The point is, I don’t take kindly to sharing,” Calvin said in a quiet tone.

Owen got goosebumps all over his arms. He lowered his fork, turned on his chair, and stared at Calvin.

Chapter Five

Although he had never heard Calvin use it, Owen recognized the tone. Lucas used it when he was about to beat someone bloody. Calvin's expression was that same calm cool one that Lucas used, too.

"If you hit me, I will retaliate," Owen warned.

"I'm not Lucas. I don't hit first then ask questions," Calvin replied.

"What is your problem?" Owen asked.

"I did come to see you at the studio. And saw that half naked man Fergus come onto you. But what surprised me is, you agreed to it," Calvin said.

"Wait? What?" Owen remembered the shoot with Fergus, but didn't know what Calvin could be referring to.

He studied Calvin--the rigid set of his jaw and furious look in his gaze. Owen's lips twitched. Calvin was jealous. He loved seeing it. Before he could register it, Calvin jerked him off the chair and against him.

"I don't share. You are mine, Owen Granger. You will tell this man that you will not be having any dinner with him unless I am with you. We are a couple and that's all there is to it." Calvin said firmly.

Owen pressed against Calvin, turning and crowding him back against the island. Calvin's hands slid along his biceps, then around his back.

"Done." Owen lowered his head to kiss him.

Calvin moved his head back. "What do you mean?"

"I already told Fergus that my boyfriend would be at dinner," Owen stated.

"You knew he was attracted to you?" Calvin was accusatory.

Owen grinned sheepishly. "Not exactly. It wasn't until he mentioned us taking in a drive-in movie at Baldwin's that I clued in that he was asking me out. So I mentioned

I was involved. And he said that would be good. That he'd ask his brothers if they wanted to come, too."

Calvin's look was speculative, and then he asked, "How many of them are there? And do they look like him? Are they gay?"

"I've only met three of them and don't know how many of them there are. They sort of look like him, but the one that is a cop is more edgy looking. I can only tell you that Fergus and Andrew are gay."

"Hmmm...good to know. And these calendars they're doing? I want one of each." Calvin leered.

Owen scowled. "No ogling other men. We're a couple."

"Yes, we are. But I'm not dead. I can look, but I'm coming home with you," Calvin replied.

Owen studied him. "Fine. But no more jealous snits when I shoot sexy men. You have to trust me."

"I do trust you. It's your being oblivious when someone is trying to pick you up that's the issue. You need to be more aware," Calvin said.

"Usually I am, but I was distracted by a certain someone who has been acting strange lately."

Calvin smiled, then sobered. "I've been dealing with what happened between us."

"And that is?" Owen prodded when he was silent for a bit.

"That we're a couple," Calvin stated.

Owen didn't let his disappointment show. He wanted it all.

"Finish eating before your food gets cold. I'm heading up to bed. Been a long day," Calvin kissed him.

Owen returned the kiss then stepped back. Calvin left. Owen sat down and finished his food. He cleaned up, then locked up the house and went upstairs to join Calvin. In the bedroom, he noticed only the lamp on his side of the bed was on. Calvin was already under the cover. Owen went into the bathroom, undressed, and got into

the shower. He soaped up. The sound of the door sliding open caught his attention. Naked, Calvin stepped into the shower.

“Turn around. I’ll wash your back.”

Owen gave him the cloth. Calvin rubbed the cloth along his shoulders. Slowly, Owen relaxed as he washed him.

“Listen closely, Owen. I’m not good at this feeling shit, and probably won’t say it often, but this time I want you to know. I love you.”

Owen moved to turn. Calvin held him in place.

“No. Don’t look at me. I love you very much. And I want you to move in here with me, make a life together. Think on it and let me know.” Calvin kissed the center of his back.

The shower door slid open again and closed. Owen turned. He saw Calvin’s blurry image through the glass as he wiped off, then left the room. Owen finished washing off then stepped out. He dried off and went into the bedroom. The light was still only lit on his side. Owen moved to the bed and sat, turning off the light and sliding in beside Calvin. Owen gripped his shoulder. Calvin resisted, but Owen persevered and shifted him to face him. Calvin’s steel blue-grey eyes were leery. Owen chuckled and rested his head on the same pillow as Calvin’s, keeping his gaze locked with his.

“I don’t expect you to be all gushing and shit. Hell, I won’t be that way either, but loving me isn’t something to be afraid of.”

“I’m not afraid. And you just took a load off my mind. I so don’t gush.” Calvin wiggled his eyebrows.

“I love you, Calvin,” Owen said.

“Oh, Owen,” Calvin gushed, blatantly false.

“Such a smartass,” Owen said.

“You’re a smartass,” Calvin said.

“Be careful. That came close to a gush,” Owen warned.

“You wish.”

“And I will move in with you.”

“Cool. We can get the rest of your stuff from your parents’ tomorrow,” Calvin said.

“We can get that. But I have things in storage, too,” Owen said.

“What stuff? You never mentioned stuff. Is it a lot of things? I like how my house looks.” Calvin frowned.

“You didn’t ask me to move in before. And our things will blend really well, like we do.” Owen went to kiss him.

Calvin put his hand on his mouth, stopping him. “That cheesy line isn’t working on me. How much stuff do you have in storage?”

“It’s not a line. I can’t believe you are more concerned with my stuff in storage than this.” Owen pushed against him.

Calvin’s eyes darkened as their erections brushed against each other. Owen did it again then ground against him.

“We’ll discuss it later,” Calvin growled.

Owen pushed him back, blanketing his body. He kissed Calvin hungrily, rubbing against his erection. Calvin gripped his ass, jerking him against him. Owen gasped then humped him.

Calvin pulled from their kiss and demanded, “In me. Now.”

Owen was only too happy to oblige. Calvin handed him the lube Owen knew he kept under his pillow, then a condom. In moments, Owen had them both ready. He widened his legs, spreading Calvin’s wider. He gripped his ass then thrust in. Calvin grunted and pushed down against his forward thrust. Owen stroked in a quick succession of thrusts. Calvin countered the motion then rocked up. His hot flesh pinned between them dampened their stomachs.

“Like that. Harder... Owen... more,” Calvin demanded.

Owen moved faster, filling that tight passage. Calvin’s hand gripped his ass, urging him on. Owen moaned, rocking deeper. Calvin’s breath hitched. Owen hit that spot inside.

Calvin's legs rose around his hips and he grunted. "Right there....yes... please...oh..."

Owen watched his gaze go unfocused. He slowed. Calvin's eyes sharpened, and then they narrowed.

"M-"

Owen cut him off. "I love you."

Calvin blinked, and then his lids lowered partially over his eyes. "I love you, too."

Owen stroked slow and steady. Calvin kissed him, a gentle brush of lips against his.

Calvin stroked his tongue deep into the recesses of Owen's mouth. He licked along the inside of his mouth. His heart raced as he recalled the words they had exchanged moments ago. He did love Owen. He couldn't even say when he had fallen. But he did know it was long before he was able to admit it to himself. Owen rocked slowly. Calvin countered his motion, gasping as his cock rubbed over the nerves inside. Pleasure spiked through him, and he tightened around Owen. Owen wrenched his lips away, letting out a lusty groan.

"Calvin."

He held Owen's ass as they moved together. His erection pinned between them was being tugged, creating a great sensation. Owen thrust, then stiffened. Calvin arched, his balls going tight, and he joined Owen in release. They held each other as they came. Owen slumped against him. Calvin slid his hands up to his back, holding him. He stroked the sweat-slick back as their breathing calmed. After some time, Owen shifted off him and disposed of the condom. He returned, sprawling over Calvin, putting his head on his chest, as was his usual sleeping position. Calvin listened to him breath, then glanced down at him.

"How much stuff?"

“Stop obsessing about the stuff. It’ll be fine. Go to sleep,” Owen said.

Calvin went silent. Owen snuggled in, and then his breathing deepened. Calvin tried to sleep, but couldn’t stop thinking about the stuff.

“I can hear you thinking too hard.” Owen’s voice was groggy.

“Just tell me.”

Owen sighed. He moved up then pushed his hand under the pillow. He lifted a condom.

“I’m going to fuck you until you stop thinking about it.”

“Good thing we both don’t have to work until Tuesday.” Calvin grinned.

Owen laughed and kissed him.

* * * * *

Calvin put his hands on his hips and glared at the back of Owen’s head. Owen went on fixing his photo equipment in the spare room that they had decided to use for it.

“Where do you want this?” Reagan said.

Calvin shifted out of the way as he came in, carting another box.

“Over by the window.”

“This room has some great light,” Reagan said, putting down the box.

“Yeah. I know. That’s why I picked it. I can get some great pictures here,” Owen said.

Reagan nodded and left. Calvin walked over to the bay windows and looked outside. The large moving van outside made his fist clench. Owen said not to worry, but there was a lot of stuff he’d had in storage. A chest pressed against his, and arms rested around his waist.

“Stop worrying. It will all fit and blend,” Owen said.

“You keep saying that.”

“Have I led you wrong yet?”

"No. Shouldn't you be out helping them unload?" Calvin asked.

"In a second. I want to get this set up."

"I thought you just needed space for your photography things, not that you would be setting up a mini-studio. I don't feel comfortable having people come here to take pictures."

"It is for my things. And the studio isn't for anyone but us," Owen said.

"Why do you need a studio for us?" Calvin asked.

"I'm going to take lots of pictures of our life together. Some of you bare and stretched out under my lights as I snap you looking so sexy."

Calvin went hard at the thought. "Only if I get to take pictures of you, too, all buff and oiled up."

Owen turned him in his arms. "We can also do some together. Get lots of exposure."

"To the maximum." Calvin kissed him.

Owen opened, dueling tongues with his. A crash sounded, making Calvin jerk away. He strode toward the door. Owen followed behind him. Calvin stopped at the top of the staircase and stared down at the mess below them. He turned to Owen.

Owen spoke before he could say a word. "Remember--you love me."

Calvin scowled. "I do. But after everyone is gone, I'm the one who will be holding the camera. And you will be the one buck naked."

"Fine with me," Owen replied.

"Now, let's go help before they wreck our house," Calvin said.

"Our house. I won't ever get tired of hearing that." Owen touched his back, then descended the stairs.

Calvin went behind him. He watched Owen's ass that he would enjoy filming later. Calvin grinned as he thought of the boxers Owen had on. He wanted a few of him in them. Calvin started to whistle the tune "Shameless" by Garth Brooks. Owen stopped and Calvin joined him on the step he'd paused on.

"I'll show you shameless later." Owen whispered as he slid his arms around his waist.

"I'm counting on it now and forever." Calvin placed his hand around Owen's waist.

"Careful now. You're getting sappy." Owen winked.

"I'll show you sappy later when I fuck you under the lights as the camera takes our picture." Calvin moved his hand down cupping Owen's firm butt.

"Let's get me moved in and get started." Owen voice was husky.

They descended together. Calvin's mind filled with all the things they would do together. Owen was right their life together was going to get lots of exposure. With Owen by his side Calvin was going to ensure that they enjoyed each moment to the maximum.

For more of the Palmer series check out [Talia Carmichael's site.](#)

About the Author

Talia Carmichael is a romantic who believes that family, no matter if it is by blood or those you choose as family, is integral to who you are. She is an author who writes sexy stories in a variety of genres. She believes in creating stories that encompass all that falling in love or lust entails, from the highs of that first blush of attraction to the lows of not knowing if you can make your coming together as a couple work, and then finally to the acceptance of the reality of making a life together. It's all about the journey.

Talia is a multi-published author with books available at Dreamspinner Press and Total-E-Bound. Among her books you'll find contemporary, futuristic, fantasy, and paranormal settings with M/M and ménage themes that will have a happily-ever-after. Her books are passionate, intense, and real... to fill the craving.

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