

Missing Person Report

Fiction by Daniel Bradford

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It was a beautiful day in early June, and sad to say I was bored. I had just finished my sophomore year of college and was going to spend the first summer of my life, away from home. My parents are a bit possessive, probably because I'm the youngest, almost eight years younger than my sister and 11 years younger than my brother. I shouldn't complain; they did their best to spoil me, despite the fact that there wasn't much to spoil me with in our modest home. My folks now have three grandchildren, my niece and two nephews, but since they're so far away, I continue to get more attention than I deserve. But I do love my parents and my siblings, their kids and the in-laws. I have an amazing family.

But as I was saying, I was sitting alone in a tiny bungalow and I was bored. I had spent some time in the yard cutting the grass and checking on my postage stamp of a garden. There was nothing on TV; I guess I could have rented a movie or something. If Neil were here, he'd provide some kind of entertainment or maybe just tell me to get off my butt and do something. He's a great roomie, a good friend and not the least bit hard to look at. He would be back in another week or so but I'd have required hospitalization by then! My summer job wouldn't begin for a few more days and when you live in a college town, there isn't much going on when school is not in session. Most of my friends were gone and my first *and last* serious boyfriend dumped me just in time to do someone else for spring break. No, that was intentional, I meant *do someone*, not *do spring break*.

I picked up the remote and made one more pass through the meager offerings; Neil's last roommate paid for cable, but we agreed to spend our money on more basic necessities. A silly commercial caught my eye, so I stopped surfing long enough to watch, but was interrupted by a knock on the door. I couldn't imagine who it might be, but I opened the door without another thought. Standing on the porch was a cop; well, actually it, I mean he, was a policeman. But he could have been a KGB agent for all I cared; he was that

beautiful, er, handsome. He was also extremely polite and businesslike. In this town, the university plays a prominent role in police activities, whether it was traffic control for a football game, an overly rowdy frat party or a presumed stolen car, when a new student couldn't remember where their car was parked. Anyway, this polite, handsome man told me the department had received a missing person report and was canvassing the neighborhood. He gave a brief description of the person, a male grad student and offered a card, requesting a call if I came across anything that might be helpful. The card was a generic one with the city symbol, so he was probably just a grunt rather than a detective or anything like that, but he had written his name and a phone number in the available space. He thanked me and as he turned away, I noticed a police car and a female officer approaching houses on the opposite side of the street. Of course, I took the opportunity to scope out his equally attractive backside as he walked towards the neighbor's house.

I stood facing the closed door, trying to memorize all the details: short brown hair, green eyes, beautiful smile, beautiful skin, beautiful arms; he was just plain beautiful! And I hadn't even gotten into uniforms or role-playing yet! His uniform fit, oh so nicely. He obviously had an athletic build but not one of those grossly overdone, steroid-induced physiques that look as unnatural as the silicone-enhanced breasts that threaten to burst out of those skinny tops women are wearing these days. Hey, I know lots of guys go crazy for muscles that are stacked four and five layers deep, but it does nothing for me. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that I'm quite average when it comes to all that. My handsome face might be compelling on some academic publication, but from the neck down, I don't have what it takes to appear in a skin flick or fashion magazine. I mean, I swim and bike to stay in shape, but as Neil has pointed out, some guys just don't bulk up, no matter what they do. Neil also tells me that I look just fine. See what I mean? He's the best roommate a guy could have, even if he is straight. I think he knows I'd jump in his bed instantly, if he ever gave me the word, but we don't play games like that. I try not to use him as jerk-off material so as not to creep him out thinking that I'm perving on him. But this cop, his card says his name is Vince, is fair game. Obviously he's older; I'd guess he's 29 or 30, something like that. I can't say if he was more, the same or less handsome than Neil, but somehow he was sexier by virtue of the fact that I only saw him for what, two or three minutes? I've seen Neil plenty of times just wearing boxers or wrapped in a towel when he's leaving the bathroom. That's another thing that I really like about Neil.

My mind drifted back to Vince, and in my mind, he was allowing me to slowly remove his uniform. Damn! He was even better looking than I thought! His t-shirt was dazzling white, like his teeth when he smiled. It was stretched snuggly across his muscled torso. I rubbed my hands across his chest and stomach, knowing that I would be coming back for more of that once the shirt was gone. He removed his gun belt, before letting me continue my task. He thought it was kind of cute that my hands had started to shake a bit now that I had reached the waistband of his uniform pants. The lowering zipper revealed heather gray boxer briefs, which displayed an appetizing bulge as the pants slid past his narrow hips. I knew he was not fully hard, but I also knew that I wouldn't be disappointed when he was. Fortunately this was fantasy, so his shoes were conveniently gone as I helped him step out

of the pants. He rested a hand on my shoulder for balance as I pulled the pants away and neatly folded them, before pressing my face into the grey knit that covered his maleness. My own cock was pressing against my clothing and I opened my eyes just enough to look again at the business card, thinking it might tip me off to some detail I might have missed. I was rubbing my own crotch, but still gently at that point. I chuckled softly realizing that basically I was beating off while standing inside the front door; surely my bed or even the sofa would have been more comfortable. But I didn't move; I just wandered back into my fantasy. Ummmm.

Suddenly a strong arm wrapped around me, pinning my arms to my sides while a hand firmly covered my mouth. It took my mind several moments to reconnect with reality, during which time a hoarse whisper sounded in my ear.

“Shhh, I won’t hurt you. Don’t move and don’t scream. Okay?”

I was still trying to focus. The coincidence of being nabbed by a possible criminal, as I was undressing a very handsome cop really had my head confused. I couldn’t think clearly enough to even respond. And although I knew this situation could be dangerous, even life threatening, I didn’t feel afraid. Mostly I was startled and honestly, a little embarrassed to be caught by a stranger, with my hands practically in my pants.

“Are you going to be quiet?” the intruder asked again.

I nodded my head and gave a muffled “Uh huh,” into the hand covering my mouth.

“Thank you. I promise I’m not going to hurt you.” Well he is polite, I thought and then censored myself for being so silly at a time like this. “I just need your help. So please stay quiet and I’m going to release you. Okay?” His voice sounded sad somehow, so again I nodded my head and his arms relaxed and fell away, but I didn’t move.

He took a step back and said. “I’m the guy they’re looking for.”

Now, for the first time, I was scared. If this guy heard the policeman make his appeal at the front door, he’d obviously been in the house for some time. How’d he get in? Why is he listed as missing? And why did he pick this house and me? I took a breath and slowly turned to face the stranger. I started to cry out but immediately raised a hand to cover my open mouth. “Jeez, what the hell happened to you?” I suppose I could have responded in a calmer manner, but I was horrified by what I saw. The entirety of the left side of his face was bruised and swollen, his eye barely open; the other eye was red and puffy, probably from tears; his lip was split and dried blood stuck to his chin; his hair was matted and the only other exposed part of his body, his arms, showed additional bruising.

“My boyfriend...” he began, but didn’t continue. His body then sagged with pain and fatigue, as if to admit defeat.

I wanted to ask a million questions, the first being, who this *boyfriend* was, so that I could go murder him. Never mind the fact that this guy was considerably bigger than me, suggested that the boyfriend was probably bigger still. Instead, I said, "Come on; let's get you cleaned up." I led him into the bathroom and had him sit on the toilet. It's been a few years, but I did have fairly decent first aid training when I was in Boy Scouts. Yeah, I know; I've heard most of the jokes too. And in my case, the only time I ever played doctor with a boy was when I met a scout from another troop at some weekend outing, just after my 15th birthday. I didn't pretend to be a doctor but I did look for any signs of broken bones or other serious injuries. His face was so swollen, I couldn't tell whether or not his jaw might be broken, but his eye looked okay as far as I could tell, though I knew the swelling was not a good thing. His arms were bruised enough that raising them over his head would be painful. I'm not even sure how he managed to grab me. Maybe I've watched too many episodes of *ER*, but I decided to cut the bloodied and soiled t-shirt off his body rather than try to pull it over his head. He didn't object. I started running water in the tub while I went to find a pair of scissors. With cuts up each sleeve to the neckband and a third cut up the front, the slightly crusty shirt fell away like a banana peel. In any other setting this would have been sexier than hell but I inhaled a huge gasp; his chest and stomach were as bruised as his arms. He winced as I tried to feel for broken ribs, but admitting that I really didn't know what exactly I should or shouldn't be feeling, I pulled away. I asked him to take the biggest breath possible and release it. He was able to do this so again, I assumed he had nothing seriously wrong inside, as far as his lungs were concerned. At least I hoped that was the case. Once his shoes and socks were off, that left only his jeans. He leaned on the sink for support, while I unfastened and lowered his jeans. The contrast with my earlier cop fantasy could not have been greater. Until this point I thought I had behaved in a reasonably professional manner, but I openly cried when I saw his bruised thighs and swollen testicles. I felt slightly nauseous at the thought of how painful the initial contact must have been. How the hell did he manage to get away from his abuser? I wondered. Except for my tears, we were both silent as I helped him into the tub and began to carefully bathe him. Cleansed of the dirt and dried blood, he looked marginally better, though he assured me he felt much better, before I left him alone to soak while I scrounged around the kitchen for something he might be able to eat.

Pay dirt! I thought to myself when I found several canned protein shakes left over from my days of trying to bulk up. I checked the label and was pleased they had not yet expired. And as I continued to dig through the cabinets I found a stash of drinking straws; you know those ones with the bendy part in the middle. I couldn't imagine where they had come from since neither Neil nor I ever used them, but right now, that really didn't matter. I placed two aspirin in Sean's mouth and held up a glass of water with a straw. The right side of his mouth tried to smile before he drank the water and then, most of the shake. As the tub drained, I used the hand-held shower to rinse him. I dried his body, dressed him in a pair of Neil's boxers, since they were a better fit than mine would have been and got him into bed. He groaned loudly as if he was going to expire. It frightened me. I mean, I was glad to help this guy but I certainly did not want a dead body in my bed. I convinced myself that it wasn't

his death rattle and closed the blinds before applying ice to his face and ointment to his lip. As afternoon became evening, I alternately applied ice and wet compresses to his swollen face. In between I held his hand.

Except for his soft breathing, Sean didn't move for nearly five hours. I was replacing the ice pack when he released a low groan. I gently brushed the hair away from his face and saw his right eye was open and staring at me. He had spoken so little, that I was surprised I even knew his name.

"How do you feel Sean?" I asked, but he said nothing. I reasoned that he was disoriented and abandoned any further questions. I convinced him to accept more aspirin and though he refused another helping of a protein shake, he drank two glasses of water, which seemingly arrived at his bladder the same moment, as he indicated that he needed to piss. I was glad to see no evidence of blood in the toilet and led him back to the bed. Almost immediately he was out.

Night had fallen and I was both exhausted and extremely anxious. I tried to read to distract myself but it was useless. Eventually I made a bed on the floor, using my sleeping bag and the winter blankets. I lay down but sleep wasn't coming. The room was so quiet I was afraid Sean had stopped breathing or something. At this point anxiety was about to take over. I considered my liabilities given the fact that I hadn't forced Sean to go to the hospital when I had suggested it. A thousand what ifs, ran through my mind. I'd never considered myself to be a drama queen but this whole situation was getting out of control.

Duh! Call Mitchell, I thought to myself. Along with Neil, he's my best friend here at school. Like me, he's an art history major and like Neil, he's extremely handsome. He's tall, blond and slender and looks like he could model for Prada or Gucci. He's fond of wearing vintage clothing in the style of Sinatra and the Rat Pack. Somehow, on him, it works. He should have graduated last month but being something of a party boy he's not quite there yet. But Mitchell is in love, which keeps him closer to home now and that in turn, has been a major boon to his academic pursuits. He's dating a med student who is interning at the hospital.

"Bruce!" Mitchell almost yelled into the phone. "Hello there. Where have you been hiding? I haven't seen you for ages."

"Yeah, it's been at least four days," I answered and we both laughed. Again, like Neil, Mitchell had a talent for making me laugh. "But I was calling to see if the doctor is in."

"If he was, I wouldn't be talking to you," he said with a giggle. "Dr. Brown's at work until 11 tonight. But what's up; are you okay? Do you need me to come over?"

"No, I'm fine, well mostly, I'm fine." I went on to explain my situation revealing only the most pertinent facts. Mitchell definitely had a flair for drama and right now I didn't need or

want to experience it. He finally agreed to call as soon as his other half arrived home. "Thanks, so much. I really appreciate this."

"Not a problem, B. I'll talk to you soon. Bye."

I breathed a sigh of relief and switched the phone to vibrate. I changed the compresses and actually managed to fall asleep. It was almost midnight when my phone wakened me.

"Sorry to call so late, but there was a respiratory emergency just before Jonathan's shift ended, so he just got home. He's got to be back at 7 in the morning, so he's already sleeping. I don't know how he does it!" Mitchell sighed to himself and his mind wandered to the man in their bed. "Mmmmm."

"Mitchell?"

"Oh, sorry. Yeah, anyway, I told him your situation and he's going to stop by on his way to the hospital so he'll be there between 6 and 6:15. Okay?"

"Yeah sure. That's great. Thanks, Mitchell. Maybe you could give him a hug and a kiss for me, if you don't mind." That last comment made me snicker and I could easily visualize the smile on Mitchell's face.

"Oh, hey Bruce. There is one more thing. He told me to be sure to tell you that if he feels it is necessary, he'll call an ambulance on the spot. You know as a doctor, he's obligated to do so."

"Yeah, sure. I understand," I said with some hesitation. I didn't want to ignore Sean's wishes, but I also didn't want him to forego necessary medical attention because of a situation that I knew nothing about. "Thanks again, Mitchell. Later."

When my phone's alarm sounded at 5:15, I quietly got up and checked on Sean before grabbing a quick shower and some fruit from the kitchen. It pained me to disturb Sean, but I needed him to be awake for the doctor's visit and I also knew I had to confess the arrangements I had made while he slept. He quietly listened as I talked, though I had no idea what he might be thinking; he never said a word. Fortunately he was more responsive to Jonathan's questions. I watched each of them in turn. In the light of day, it was clear to me that the facial swelling had diminished considerably. I also watched Jonathan. He's a big man and not handsome by any traditional definition. His brown hair is a bit shaggy, probably because he never has time to do anything with it. (I've *never* seen Mitchell with a *single hair* out of place!) And his features: eyes, nose and lips all seem just a bit too large for his face. But his eyes are huge, gentle brown pools and those lips seem to be made for kissing, and maybe a couple other things. No wonder Mitchell is so taken with him. But it was his demeanor that affected me most. I mean, I was just watching, and even I felt like at the moment, Sean was the only patient in the world. I hoped Sean felt this as well. Unless

he was brain damaged, how could he possibly *not* notice! But how could I even have thought something like that? What if that asshole of a boyfriend really did do some serious damage? I felt like I might cry but then I felt only anger at a certain, unknown low-life of a man.

Jonathan was packing up when he said. "It appears you have no broken bones and I suspect only internal bruising. By necessity, this exam has been rather superficial, so as a doctor, I strongly recommend you go to the hospital for a more thorough examination. I'm concerned about possible head and abdominal injuries. And as Bruce's friend, I suggest you call the police."

At the door, Dr. Brown offered to schedule an appointment and also gave me a list of symptoms I should be aware of, any of which he stressed, would require immediate attention. I thanked him profusely and gave him a hug; I'd let Mitchell provide the kiss.

After eating, Sean resumed sleeping until almost 1:00. Since he again needed to relieve his bladder I suggested a warm bath to make the trip more worthwhile. I think Sean actually smiled a tiny bit at my suggestion, though his face didn't allow much smiling at this point. After the bath, I was able to dress him in his own boxers as I had washed his clothing, except for the destroyed shirt, which lay in the trash. He ate some lunch and I spent some time massaging the portions of his body that weren't bruised; those consisted primarily of his feet and lower legs, his hands and shoulders. As he relaxed, I took advantage of the situation to broach the subject of the police. I wasn't too concerned about filing charges, but didn't want the local police to waste time and energy looking for what was no longer lost. Sean agreed and I sighed with relief. I sat next to the bed and held his hand a while longer. Almost 24 hours after he came into my house, Sean looked a bit more like a human being than some kind of road kill. Actually, he looked kind of sweet lying there, despite the remnants of swelling and his severely discolored skin. And without another thought, I leaned in and ever so lightly kissed his mouth, which was still slightly misshapen by the swelling. On the inside, I silently laughed at my own folly, as I tasted the ointment I'd put on his lips. But as I straightened up I saw his eyes were open. I blushed with embarrassment until he said, "Thank you." I smiled at him; he tried to do the same.

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"Yo, Kepler here," was the first thing I heard after the call connected.

"Um, a... Officer Kepler? I nervously answered him.

"Yes, that's me," he replied in the same rich baritone, but now with less of the police bark to it.

I relaxed a tiny bit at this other voice, the one I remembered from yesterday. "Yes, sir. Ah, my name is Bruce, and you were in the neighborhood yesterday, um, looking for someone who was missing. Well, sir..."

"Bruce, you don't need to call me sir," the officer interrupted. "I think I wrote Vince Kepler on my card. You can call me Vince, okay?"

He sounded so nice that now I was a bit flustered. "Yeah, sure...Vince. Anyway, I wanted to let you know that I found the guy, so you can just stop looking for him. Okay?" I kind of hoped he'd agree and that would be the end of it. "Oh, I forgot! He's at my house, but he was pretty badly beaten by his drunken room mate." I purposely left out any mention of a personal relationship between the two. If Vince Kepler or any of the police department were fag-haters, that would only make things worse for Sean. "Right now he's not interested in pressing charges or anything, but of course he doesn't want that guy to know where he is or anything. So if someone named Martin Boyle, or Marty Boyle makes an inquiry please don't tell him anything. Okay?" God this was getting complicated!

"Bruce, all of us in the department, rely on citizen participation to make things work, so I want you to know that I really appreciate you taking the time to make this call. However, there are departmental guidelines that must be followed and I need to check with my superiors. I'm not at liberty to tell you whether or not Martin Boyle is involved, but be assured that I'll honor your request, at least until the situation can be clarified. May I call you back at this number?" [pause] "Bruce, you there?"

God, how embarrassing! I'd been listening to that rich voice and hardly heard a word. My cock was nearly hard, just thinking about Officer Vince. "Uh, yeah, sure, okay. Thanks a lot, Vince."

"You're welcome Bruce. Thanks for the information. I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Okay?"

"That's cool. Bye." I guess I really do need to get laid or something, I thought as I ended the call. I just hope this doesn't turn into some big CSI thing!

Jonathan had said it was good for Sean to rest, but I was still nervous that he remained inert for hours at a stretch. The next time he awoke it was early evening. I told him that I was going to the store, but to call if he needed anything while I was away. Maybe it was just my paranoia, but I dragged the hardwired phone, a powder blue princess phone I bought at a yard sale for a buck, into the room and placed it on the side table along with my cell number. "Use this phone, not your cell; I don't want *him* to trace your calls or anything." I wasn't certain, but I thought Sean smirked at me; I couldn't be sure because of his crooked face.

I picked up a few groceries, including yogurt, applesauce, soup and similar foodstuffs that didn't require much chewing, as I was sure the diet of protein shakes was old after just one day. Sean and I shared some soup. I know he could feed himself but I thought it was fun to spoon-feed him and he didn't complain, nor did he give me grief for eating a rather large sandwich as he looked on. But man, he got closer than ever to smiling when I brought in a small dish of ice cream. I guess we have at least one thing in common. I told Sean about my conversation with the police, noting that Officer Kepler would be stopping by tomorrow for a brief interview. "Sean, I don't think there's anything to worry about, cuz the guy seems really cool, even though as he said, our story does sound a bit suspicious," I said with a small smile. For a moment I felt like a kid playing cops and robbers or something, like Sean and I were holed up in this place hiding from the law. I guess my smile must of grown, because Sean sort of smiled too.

Vince admitted that he couldn't place me on the phone, but remembered me as soon as he spotted the house. That admission pleased me as I felt his strong handshake, saw his smile and of course, his very hot body. If anything, he was a better package than I had remembered; I felt my ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality was still intact. I glanced at his left hand and saw his ring finger was bare. "Sean's in here," I said after closing the door and leading him the short distance to my bedroom. I introduced the two men and exited for the living room, as I thought it best to give them privacy and also because I didn't want to embarrass myself.

As promised, the interview was brief. As professional as always, Vince asked me to step outside as he was preparing to leave. "I probably shouldn't say anything, but somewhere in this city there's a guy who deserves to be behind bars, or worse. I can't and won't do anything about that unless Sean makes a move." Vince sighed and shook his head. "Damn, I thought this shit...Sorry," he said as he obviously edited his remarks. "Please call if either of you need anything. Okay? You still have my card, right?"

"Yeah Vince. Thanks for being so cool with all of this. The last time I saw you, I didn't even know Sean; I still don't. He hasn't said much, but I know he's hurting, and not just from the beating. *No one* deserves what he got."

"You're right about that," Vince agreed. "That's why I want you to call if you guys need anything, anything at all. Got that?"

God, I wanted to hug and kiss this man, but instead I simply said, "Yes sir!" We exchanged smiles and handshakes before he moved to his squad car.

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Inside, Sean looked peaceful and content, which allowed me to relax a bit. He asked me to check whether or not the University Health Clinic was open, something I was more than

happy to do. The clinic was open and Sean made an appointment for early afternoon. Thank god, Mitchell was able and willing to drive us, since neither of us had a car.

Sean's own jeans were rather snug, so I borrowed some of Neil's clothes and dressed him before Mitchell arrived. The female physician basically repeated what Jonathan had done the day before, though she did have access to additional equipment. She praised my nursing skills, but that was a short-lived moment of pride, when she wrote up orders for several tests and x-rays at the hospital. It was well after 6:00 when we left the hospital; I was tired and Sean looked exhausted. Fortunately, Mitchell ran into Jonathan while we were at the hospital, so he was energized for whatever else the evening might present. Apparently Sean had several cracked ribs, so his torso was bound, which seemed to provide a bit of comfort. A helpful nurse explained how the wrapping was done, so I'd be able to remove and replace the wrappings if Sean wanted to bathe. The other x-rays revealed nothing significant, though we still had to wait until the lab was able to process the other tests. At the house, I laughed when Sean asked for ice cream, after I'd gotten him into bed.

Mitchell had a couple of hours to kill, so he stayed and watched the video that failed to interest Sean the previous evening. We ate popcorn, laughed at the movie and just enjoyed ourselves until Mitchell excused himself in order to be home to meet his man. We hugged and I even got a kiss from my friend before he headed home, which was a bright note on this rather trying day. Sean appeared to be sleeping peacefully, so I quietly stripped and dropped onto my makeshift bed. I was sleeping almost immediately.

For the first time in our three-day-old relationship, Sean was awake before me.

“Nurse! Bruce! Dude!” He loudly whispered in an attempt to wake me gently. “I gotta get to the head, now!” He said a bit louder and with some urgency.

I opened my eyes and saw the bedroom ceiling first. Craning my neck, I saw Sean upside down, still lying in my bed. I couldn't help it; I just laughed at him. I guess it was our predicament that struck me as humorous. I scrambled from the floor, revealing my nearly naked body to Sean for the first time. I was somewhat self-conscious, which seemed silly considering how intimate we had been due to his injuries. Then looking at Sean's face, it was obvious he wasn't even looking at my body; his focus was the goal of the toilet on the other side of the bedroom wall. I helped him walk to the bathroom and lower his boxers as I provided a steady arm to lean on as he lowered himself onto the seat. He didn't seem the least bit embarrassed and I was pleased to see that the swelling and bruises at his crotch had diminished considerably. At that point, I departed to give him with some semblance of privacy, though I didn't close the door as I exited the small room.

“It's okay, buddy. The coast is clear,” I heard from behind me before the flush of the toilet and water at the sink drowned out any other sounds. I turned to see Sean washing his hands, though I noticed he never looked at the mirror over the sink. I'm such a wimp, I

thought as I approached. He's braver than I'll ever be in two or three lifetimes, I confessed to myself as he put down the towel and placed an arm over my shoulder. I placed my arm around his slim waist. Occasionally I noticed his bound ribs rub against my naked ones and that led my focus to his broad shoulders. As we approached the bed, he lightly kissed my cheek. "Thanks, again," is all he said as I helped him back onto the bed.

The hospital staff had sent us home with a prescription and some topical medications, which gave me something to make myself feel needed and important, pending the results of the lab tests. Clearly our days together were numbered and that bothered me more than I wanted like to admit. I guess it's a good thing I didn't get into nursing. Like my mother said, I have a tendency to be more emotional than either of my siblings and certainly more subjective than objective. Is that why I felt attached to a battered grad student that I didn't even know? I told Sean that I had orientation for my new job for several hours the next day, but promised I'd always be at the other end of a phone call. To add insult to injury, the bruising and swelling had started to subside and for the first time, I was beginning to see how handsome Sean actually was.

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I managed to impress the manager/trainer by the simple fact that I had worn a tie to orientation. I took advantage of this obvious, though very slim margin and asked to have my start date delayed as long as might be reasonable because of a family issue. Maybe it wasn't just the tie; apparently my *almost* honest appeal touched the right spot and she assured me she would do whatever she could to help me with my predicament. When I got home, Sean was sitting on the sofa, reading a book. Is he a fucker or what?!?

I took off my tie and grabbed a soda from the kitchen. After a couple of huge gulps, I walked into the living room and sat in the only chair. I hoped to appear nonchalant as Sean watched every move I made. I focused on my soda and he returned to his book. When I emptied the can, I stood and walked into the bedroom and fell onto my bed. It felt strangely foreign; it had been almost a week since I had slept in it. And of course, it smelled like Sean. I couldn't help it: I started to cry softly.

The room was considerably darker when I finally rolled over to find Sean sitting next to me on the edge of the bed. I rubbed my eyes, knowing that they were red and swollen from my tears. Sean's calm expression reminded me of my mother. How much did he know or suspect? I asked myself as I met his gentle gaze. His hand slowly rubbed my leg; at that moment it was comforting rather than erotic. Sean motioned for me to make space on the narrow bed, where he settled in, leaving space between my body and his bruised one. His arm moved up to stroke my hair and I moved off into my personal fantasy world. However, I was aware that he had asked me go to his apartment tomorrow to retrieve his belongings. Of course I had said yes, immediately, without any thought as to the practicalities of honoring his request. Shortly thereafter, I was sleeping more soundly than I had all week.

When I opened my eyes, they focused on Sean's face, which was still painted with bruises. I thought it looked, almost handsome. I carefully extricated myself from the bed and went to the kitchen to make some coffee. Neither Neil nor his Ford Explorer was available, so I turned to Mitchell. It was still early but I dialed his number only to be greeted by his voice mail. I left him a message.

After a cup of coffee, I called Vince Kepler; I felt nervous yet hopeful. Fortunately for me, his deep voice calmed my nerves and stoked my confidence as I told him of my need for help to assist Sean in retrieving his belongings. There was the possibility that we might encounter Marty and I was looking for protection, even if that involved a service revolver. Of course I didn't tell Vince, but I admitted to myself at that moment that I was probably falling in love with the man that was presently sleeping in my bed. To his credit, Vince honored his promise of help.

Mitchell parked in front of the condominium complex, and I noticed a non-descript car with state license plates. To me it screamed unmarked police car or narcotics officer but I was glad Vince hadn't arrived in his traditional black and white sedan. I approached the driver's side window and was surprised to see an older man seated at the wheel; Vince smiled at me from the passenger's side before both men, dressed in plainclothes, exited the vehicle. Even to my untrained eye, their guns and handcuffs were visible though discrete; I breathed a sigh of relief as Vince introduced Officer Parker. At my signal, Sean and Mitchell approached and we entered the building.

Parker seemed a bit unnerved by our ostensible robbery, but he was as helpful as any college buddy would have been. We were all surprised and a bit comforted by the fact that Sean only selected essentials: his computer and printer, clothes, some CDs and way more than a few books. I didn't know Sean but I felt certain that he was abandoning a lot of personal property so as not to burden us and also not to antagonize Marty. In my mind, Sean was being generous to a fault, but that just made me hate Martin Boyle even more. He excused himself to leave an envelope on the kitchen counter. "It's the keys and a note telling him I've changed my phone number," he said by way of explanation as I waited for him at the front door. He didn't tell any of us that he had also included his share of the month's rent, in cash. We closed the door behind us to find Vince waiting in the hall. Even, I was surprised to see Vince and Parker help off-load the goods when we returned home. Mitchell was gone before I had an opportunity to thank him, but I made a special effort to thank the two policemen.

I was stunned to say the least, when two days later; Sean announced that a taxi was on its way to take him to the bus station. He explained that he was going to stay with his sister as he recovered and regrouped, which made perfect sense but didn't lessen my objection to his plan. We almost had a fight, before he agreed to let me accompany him. At the station he conceded to let me pay the tip, after he refused to split the tariff. He looked so small and innocent in the light jersey hoodie he was wearing to cover his fading bruises. Of course that was me being silly, since he was older and much bigger than me! A quick hug

brought tears to my eyes. That's as brave as I could be as I stood back and watched him purchase a ticket and board the bus. He had promised he would call, though he hadn't given me his cell number. I continued to cry as the bus pulled away and turned the corner. Neither of us waved; I just cried. Ten minutes passed before I started to walk home; five miles is plenty of time to cry I told myself.

Well, maybe it was only two and a half or three miles, but the tears dried up rather quickly as I walked. My mind wandered, and I welcomed the vaguely empty, numb sensation that came over me. At home I stripped and got into bed, though it was only late afternoon. Again I could smell Sean but instead of crying I got angry.

"Fuck! Fuck! FUCK YOU!" I yelled, as I viciously punched the pillow to underscore each curse. I gasped and started to cry when I became aware of my actions. I felt utterly horrified and absolutely ashamed to think that I was behaving the way Marty must have acted when he had beaten Sean. I crumpled into a ball and cried for some time; this hurt way more than watching the bus pull away. I must have slept for a brief period, because I was disoriented when I opened my eyes; I also felt like shit. I went to the bathroom to piss and rinse my face, and then to avoid his scent, I dropped onto the floor, which had been my bed all week.

After a night of restless sleep, I felt sort of hung-over. It was almost 11:00 and despite myself I smiled weakly at the sound of birds and the gorgeous summer day outside the window. If I was the kind of guy that went to the gym, I would have hit it hard or gone for a good long run to put yesterday behind me, instead I mowed the lawn, showered, dressed and felt, almost normal.

* * * * *

Shortly thereafter, the summer session began. I had two, 2-unit classes and my supervisors seemed to like me, so I got all the hours I could handle at work. Neil returned from his short vacation and, like I said, life was back to normal, more or less. Mitchell and I were in a survey class dedicated to New York's Ash Can School, and I discovered David in Chemistry 99, an intro/refresher class for dummies like myself. He was a cute diversion, very bright and probably responsible for getting me through the course. At work, a rather attractive, though very annoying supervisor kept hitting on me. He wasn't exactly my boss, but he was management, so I couldn't seriously consider him as boyfriend material. And Neil, thank god, was just Neil.

David turned out to be the perfect summer playmate: cute, smart, funny and *young*. His birthday is in October so he was still several months away from his 18th birthday. I'm barely 20 so it's not like I'm *that* much older, but it sure felt like it; it was sort of like having a kid brother I guess. In a way it's a good thing because it helped us be friends without getting serious about a relationship. Sometimes we would hold hands and occasionally cuddle or kiss; we kept our clothes on *most* of the time. I really liked watching him. To me he was sort

of a chameleon: up close he looked like a pixie with huge dimples; a slightly turned-up nose, sprinkled with freckles; a great smile, which seemed to make his eyes sparkle and shaggy hair that invariably hung in his eyes. Crossing campus, he looked like the typical skater boy with baggy shorts and baseball cap; but in class he was the complete science nerd, sans the pocket protector. I mean; I'd bet he knew the material at least as well as our instructor. One day I asked him about that; it was the day I learned just how funny David could be.

"Well, I've known I was gay for several years now, but I grew up in a small town and the 'rents are regular church-goers, so I kept it to myself. I actually had a boyfriend for most of senior year, but it got to be too hard keeping it secret, so we broke up. It's kind of a drag, cuz he's *way hot* and we sort of planned to get together here this fall but now he's going to school somewhere else." David shrugged his shoulders and flashed me a smile. "Anyway, after I got accepted here, I did some research and discovered this class. I convinced the 'rents to let me enroll so I could, you know, sort of check out the place before school starts for real." He teased me with another smile. "They thought it was an excellent plan, especially after my aunt and uncle agree to let me stay with them while I'm here. Of course, I was stoked cuz my plan was working. Right? So, the day before I leave, I come out to my folks." At that point my mouth fell open in disbelief. His timing seemed so odd, sort of like 'I hate to eat and run,' until he explained. "I was expecting a minor disaster, at the *very least*, but they hugged me and kissed me, said they loved me and even admitted that they had suspected for quite some time and were glad I finally told them, blah, blah, blah. It was just like some silly TV movie!" He shook his head in mock disgust. "Hell, I was kinda bummed, since this whole summer school thing was my insurance for when they kicked me out of the house! I covered this stuff in high school, *a year ago!*" The smile on his face gave way to laughter after this last statement. At that point I laughed along with him. Then I hugged him for the first time.

David admitted that he probably did know the material as well as our instructor, but we both agree it couldn't hurt to start college with an 'A' on your record. It was an even better deal for me. See, until then, I had avoided every science class that wasn't required, but this past year I had pretty much decided that I'd like to go to grad school and eventually get into art conservation and restoration, which I knew would involve all kinds of chemistry. So with David, I got a tutor *and* a friend! Oh, did I mention, he's cute?

The summer session ended. David returned home to wait for the fall quarter to begin. Jonathan somehow managed to get a few days off, so he and Mitchell split for parts unknown. I received a B on my Chemistry final, so Neil organized a small house party to celebrate. (I told you he's a cool dude.) The party was fun, but it wasn't until days later that I realized that with David and Neil's support, I had began to overcome my morbid fear of science. I knew I'd need a tutor at least some of the time, but at least now I was reasonably confident that I could do it. And I gotta say; *that, felt pretty damn good!*

The remaining weeks before the school year got underway, passed quickly. My summer session grades had arrived and my fall class schedule had been confirmed, without surprises in either envelope. I felt like I was finally back on track. By now, I was so accustomed to seeing the tidy stack of Sean's belongings in the corner of the dining room, that I seldom noticed them. That of course, didn't mean that I had forgotten him; he was more or less, comfortably stored in my memory, at least most of the time. I couldn't afford to go home to visit, but I called my parents frequently and my siblings on several occasions before the onslaught of the new school year. While the incoming freshmen were being processed through orientation, Neil hosted another party to kick off the new school year, now that his friends were back in town; I was happy that Mitchell and Jonathan were able to attend.

* * * * *

Summer had definitely given way to fall. God, I love this time of year! I really liked my classes and most of my instructors. Mitchell and I crossed paths frequently, though we shared only one class. Neil was a very serious student, but he did participate in intramural soccer. I liked sharing a house with this particular jock and attended his games whenever I could. David called occasionally, but of course, he now had serious studies and I suspected before long, a real boyfriend, or two. My supervisor told me that she would keep me on through the winter holidays if I were interested, of course, I most definitely was. 'It was all good,' as they say, and I was in no position to argue with popular opinion.

I was at a study carrel in the library, but admittedly, my text was getting some pretty serious competition from the colored leaves and late afternoon sun, just beyond the wall of glass. My phone grabbed my attention. I didn't recognize the number, though it included the school's prefix "Hello?"

"Hey, Bruce, It's Sean. I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

"No. I'm just here at the library, doing some reading." I replied quietly given my location and wondered if my voice had revealed my excitement at the sound of his voice. "How are you?" I asked sincerely.

"Good. I'm good. And you?"

"Me? Yeah, I'm good too. Thanks for asking. So what's up with you?" That was a potentially a loaded question, though I had absolutely no idea how he might respond.

"Nothing much, really. Glad to hear you are well," he said casually. "But I know the rent is overdue on my storage, so I'd like to stop by and take it off your hands one of these days, maybe, um... sometime when it's convenient for you."

We settled on a date and time for the pick up. The entire exchange was very business-like and terse niceties concluded the call. I slammed my textbook closed; I knew damn well, there wouldn't be any serious studying with Sean now occupying the position of front and center in my brain

Thankfully, Neil wasn't home at the appointed hour; it wasn't that I was embarrassed or ashamed of Sean, but because I was still hung up on a guy, who apparently didn't feel similarly about me. Still, I was a bit surprised to see a very attractive woman standing at Sean's side when I opened the door. Dressed in t-shirts and jeans, they looked like the quintessential all-American couple. They were incredibly handsome and... whatever! This was also the first time I'd seen Sean when he didn't appear to have just lost a battle with a Mac truck; he was stunning. My first reaction was resentment, which prompted me to slam the door in their faces but how could I? I mean, they were both smiling... beautiful, genuine, polite smiles. Sean stalled my reaction by making the introductions. I responded like a zombie or perhaps more accurately, like an idiot. I thought he said her name was Theresa, a fellow grad student who shared the oversized closet with a window that the university deemed to be office space for both grad student/TAs. Between the three of us, Sean's possessions were quickly transferred to the Honda hatchback at the curb. "Fuck!" I yelled as the car pulled away. After almost three months of feeling pretty okay, I went into meltdown.

Maybe it was a day or maybe a month later; I really don't know. Seeing Sean had kind of messed me up, as I couldn't stop thinking about him. Needless to say, I was surprised when I heard Sean's voice on the phone asking to meet me for coffee to thank me, or something. "Yeah, sure, whatever," I replied by rote. Oh, thank you Jesus, for allowing me to remember the pertinent portions of our conversation, I thought as I ended the call. I had mostly been listening to his voice while ignoring the words.

While nursing a cup of decaf, I waited for Sean. He arrived exactly one minute early and spotted me sitting alone at a table near the back of the café.

"Hope I didn't keep you waiting," he said and smiled. It was only the second or third time I had seen it. And his was beautiful.

"No. Not at all," I responded wanly.

He settled in after retrieving his own steaming cup. We talked for nearly a half hour; mostly it was he thanking me. It was difficult for me to respond; I didn't feel like I had done anything to earn his effusive gratitude. Mostly I nodded in acknowledgement or agreement. "Thanks again," he said as he stood to leave. I couldn't move from my seated position and watched him move toward the exit. I think it was some guy cleaning the tables that finally convinced me to head home.

Days later, at the start of homecoming week, Sean called again and invited me to join him for the game. As before, I agreed without even thinking. But this time, as I closed my phone, I began to smile. I wasn't a serious fan of the sport, but the fact that Sean had called to invite me had me excited as hell! We entered the stadium where I discovered that we had really good seats, fairly close to the 40-yard line. How cool was that? It was a good game even though our team lost; as the clock counted the final seconds, the visiting team's field goal attempt sailed through the uprights. But because of the man sitting next to me, I was only mildly disappointed.

We were largely silent, as we made our way through the noisy crowd exiting the stadium. I was smiling and gladly followed Sean's lead with his arm loosely draped over my shoulder. When he stopped beside the Honda hatchback, which I had assumed was Theresa's; I looked up at his face questioningly. He just opened the door and motioned me inside, closing the door behind me.

I'm sure Sean said something, as the car moved down the road, but I couldn't repeat a single word. Eventually we stopped at a restaurant and dined; it was neither extravagant nor plain. In my mind, it was Nirvana. For the most part, I focused on his handsome face and the smile that was no longer constrained by swelling. God, I'm a freak!

He parked the car near his dorm, which had been recently converted into grad student housing from some ancient, abandoned classroom facilities. The night air was brisk, which only heightened the sensation of Sean's warm body next to mine. I had consumed no alcohol, yet felt mildly intoxicated. The mercury vapor lighting of the parking lot gave way to cool fluorescents as we walked down a corridor, which was simultaneously foreign and familiar. There was a moment of darkness as Sean urged me into his room. The sudden warm glow of a wall sconce coincided with the sound of the door closing. In that moment I noticed the modest space, which had been carved from a former classroom. The room was narrow but tall; it was vaguely reminiscent of lofts I had seen in design magazines. I thought I noticed a tiny galley kitchen to my left, but a kiss halted my architectural tour. "Mmmmm," I murmured in response to Sean's affection and returned the kiss as we stood inside the doorway.

Sean pulled back to speak. "I'm sorry it has taken me so long to say this, Bruce. I have no idea how I ended up in your house that day, but the moment you turned around to face me, I knew you were something special. Probably even then, part of me knew that I already loved you, but I was afraid after what..." I covered his mouth with two fingers to let him know I understood and because I did not want to hear him mention that other guy or what he had done to Sean.

"Sssssh," I whispered, before clamping my mouth on his. Despite the fact that we were fully engaged in a kiss, I knew we were both smiling.

I was content to just stand in that spot, to hug and kiss him all night. Sean gently removed our sweaters and shirts. That skin on skin contact exponentially increased the heat that was building between us and I willingly followed him to a mattress that was lying in shadow. We undressed, or more likely, he undressed me, as I awoke naked in Sean's embrace sometime the following morning. This must be a dream, or heaven, I thought as I pulled him closer and returned to sleep. The next time I awoke, my entire body was tingling. Sean's hand softly and slowly caressed my back and occasionally drifted to my ass. Our crotches pushed against one another of their own volition, which forced our stiff cocks to rub together as well. Kisses rained down on my face, and when I finally opened my eyes, I saw that Sean was kissing me with his own eyes wide open. I'd never done that and now it seemed like the most loving, erotic thing I'd ever seen. I pushed into his body and rolled on top of him, as our tongues dueled in our mouths. My hands caressed Sean's hair while his traveled down my back once again, found my ass and pulled me closer as his hips thrust up to meet mine. Our tongues strangled my scream, as the first of a long series of shots fired from my swollen cockhead. After the third shot, I had to pull away from Sean's delicious mouth, tipping my head back, gasping for air. I could feel our hearts pounding in our chests and then I felt something else. "Ahhhh," Sean exhaled as his stiff prick also began to unload. Our bellies were completely slick and I increased my thrusts to heighten the delicious friction; as I lowered my mouth to Sean's neck, the pulse that throbbed there greeted my kisses. I couldn't believe it; just kissing had triggered the most intense orgasm of my life! Even as I kissed and nibbled Sean's smooth neck between shallow breaths, I felt more fluid escape my cock.

After an exquisite eternity we returned to reality and I giggled into Sean's neck. "Sorry," I said quietly.

"No need to apologize but what's so funny?" he asked with the hint of a smile on his face.

I raised myself on my elbows so I could look at him. "Nothing really," I said with another giggle. "Just sometimes my mind goes places without me. And this time it reminded me of the fact that I was moping around the house because I was bored, the day you showed up." I smiled; Sean didn't. "I haven't been bored a day since," I said and smiled again. This time Sean smiled too. "I think it might be because I love you," I said before I kissed him again.

"Good," he said with a growing smile. "Because I *know* I love you."

After more kisses, Sean rolled us over and raised himself on his hands and knees above me. His next kiss landed on my chin and his teeth lightly nibbled it before he continued to my neck, up to my ear and then down to my chest. His lips, tongue and teeth teased and tormented my nipples before he continued down my smooth torso, now lapping up our mixed juices along the way. My soft moans were interrupted by a sharp gasp as he cleaned the tip of my still hard cock, before sliding down to my balls. He settled on his haunches between my legs so he could use his hands for further stimulation. They stroked

my thighs and belly, occasionally teased my cock and frequently tickled the sweet spot right behind my balls, as his mouth seemed to be coaxing my balls to reload.

Needless to say, I was in ecstasy and could only moan when his mouth left my balls to inhale my cock. He hummed and licked and pleasured my rod for nearly 15 minutes, until his expert ministrations finally forced my hips off the bed as he drained my balls into his mouth. A series of quick kisses up my torso brought his mouth back to mine and we embraced with still more kisses.

I awoke some time later in his embrace, but now Sean convinced me to get up and shower. Unfortunately, it was a standard issue, dormitory stall, so it was a snug fit for two, though we didn't mind the closeness. Despite the limited space, I was able to kneel before Sean. I remembered how swollen his balls had been after his accident, but now it was obvious he had an extraordinarily large pair. I knew I'd never get them both in my mouth at the same time, but his appreciative sounds made me think he didn't mind too much. His cock was proportionate to his balls; it'll take some practice if I ever expect to be able to go all the way down on him. In my mind I was smiling, because, at the moment, my lips were busy with something else.

The falling water has made the shower stall a soothing cocoon, until Sean's scream bounced off the tile walls. His generous load overwhelmed my mouth and some of his juice slid out of my mouth. Still, I continued to worship his rigid dick meat until the flow had stopped and his breathing started to return to normal. I actually *did* smile as I finally released his softening member and moved up to kiss his mouth again.

I tried not to get too far ahead of myself as we headed out to eat. I was thinking that maybe he should come home with me during the Christmas break. And I knew Neil wouldn't be on campus next year, so the house would be mine to share with whomever I chose. And now I know Sean has a car. It all sounded so damn good! I set my fork down after taking a bite of my omelet and looked over to see him smiling at me. For the first time, I noticed his nose was a bit crooked, though still beautiful.

"Little League," is all he said in response to my question.