

Lassiter Learns How to Bend

By tera_gram

Rating: NC-17 for M/M, oral sex

Pairings: Shawn/Lassiter

Warning: Shassie Slash. Takes place after Lassie Did A Bad Bad Thing. Contains spoilers for that episode.

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Summary: Lassiter is alarmed at finding himself attracted to Spencer following the Drimmer incident. He visits a friend in San Francisco, looking for advice, but Spencer has tailed him. Lust overtakes them in the gayest city in the world, but can their relationship survive returning to Santa Barbara?

In the name of Sweet Lady Justice...why does this have to be happening to me now?

Lassiter wondered. It wasn't enough that Ernesto Chavez had been shot in his custody, or that he'd been framed for the murder and nearly lost his career. No, now his mind and body were rebelling against him, indicating the beginnings of an inevitable decline into madness and dementia. In a way, the whole thing could be blamed on former detective John Drimmer. It was his idea that Lassiter's fake suicide note should portray him and Spencer as former lovers. That idea had somehow wormed its way into his subconscious and laid eggs.

At first he'd become focused on whether people thought the idea was credible. His discussion with O'Hara over lunch in the break room had not put his mind to rest.

"Nobody would have believed that fake note, right?" He frowned down at his Enchirito instead of looking at her directly.

"Maybe," she said around a mouthful of chicken taco, then swallowed. "Drimmer was pretty clever. The note would be in your handwriting, and it would explain why Shawn's always been so uninhibited with you around the station. I mean the guy sat in your lap. He doesn't do that to me."

"I could maybe—maybe—see people thinking that Spencer was gay, but me? Would you have bought that?"

"Well..." O'Hara looked around the room as if desperate for something to change the subject. "Our job could be said to attract people with certain repressed impulses, Carlton. There's a reason one of the Village People is a cop. There's the uniform, and the

homosocial atmosphere—not every station has as many women as ours does, you know.”

“But I’ve been married. To a woman.”

“So was Elton John. And Rock Hudson.”

“Okay, fair enough. But even if I were some sort of late-blooming homosexual, why would I choose Spencer of all people? He’s irresponsible, he’s socially embarrassing, and he’s an attention sponge the likes of which I have never seen.”

“Opposites attract?” While Lassiter continued to frown at his lunch she continued. “Look, Drimmer was just grabbing for the first thing he thought would make people uncomfortable and not look too closely at your deaths. Let’s move on.”

But Lassiter wasn’t moving on. In fact he was kind of fixated. He kept going over in his mind all the reasons that this imagined relationship was absurd. But instead of putting his mind at rest it was reminding him of a line from Hamlet he’d learned in college, while dating an actress: “The lady doth protest too much, methinks.” It was not reassuring.

It wasn’t that he hated Spencer. Lately he’d developed quite a respect for him. Sure, Spencer was annoying, but he was good at what he did. Much of what he did was ridiculous, but whatever was behind the façade was solid. Plus, Spencer had been on his side through the whole Drimmer fiasco, and even the Chief and O’Hara had been giving him some looks on that one. Spencer had trusted in his innocence, and that meant something. Exactly what it meant, he wasn’t sure.

Since shooting Drimmer he’d been having a recurring dream in which he hadn’t reached the gun in time, or had plunged his hand into the bowl to find nothing but peanuts. The dream ended with Drimmer shooting Spencer, and Lassiter woke in a cold sweat with a sense of anger and loss that felt out of proportion to the situation. Several criminals had tried to kill Lassiter. It was part of the job that every police officer accepted. He didn’t take it personally. That Drimmer had tried to kill Shawn enraged him in a way that was unexpected and tinged with a protectiveness that went beyond his basic duty to the general citizenry of Santa Barbara.

Maybe, he thought, I’ve got post-traumatic stress. True, he didn’t have any symptoms other than the nightmares and the obsession, but it was a condition that medicine was still trying to understand. Just in case it wasn’t PTSD he’d forced himself to return Spencer’s blue plaid shirt, which he’d borrowed during their investigation into the Chavez shooting. He had made a point of not smelling it before tossing in the washer, but it bothered him that he’d wanted to.

It didn’t help any that Spencer was clinging to him like a piece of Velcro. He kept showing up with presents. He brought him lunch and coffee. He ‘just happened’ to have an extra almond croissant. He seemed to be standing even closer to him than normal. And every time Lassiter had looked he’d caught Spencer watching him with those disturbing

eyes of his. Lassiter firmly believed that eyes should be a specific colour, not vary from blue to green to hazel according ones clothing choice.

While frustrating, Spencer's behaviour made a kind of sense. Being that close to getting shot in the head was probably a new and upsetting experience for him. He'd been treating police work as a hobby, and now it had almost gotten him killed. And since Lassiter had been pretty heroic under the circumstances, it was understandable that Spencer felt safer around him. Lassiter actually had to stifle the impulse to reach out and comfort him sometimes. *But such an attempt would be awkward and likely to be misunderstood*, he told himself. He was pretty sure that if he just waited it out Spencer would get back to his carefree irresponsible self.

And then there had been the Cruickshanks case. A woman had been found bludgeoned to death in a storage room at the back of her store. The room was a warren of narrow aisles between towering shelves of boxed stock. Lassiter had been recording the scene of crime details in his notebook. Spencer had been spinning around like a dervish, muttering something about the Wicked Witch of the West.

O'Hara approached, carrying a bloody shoe in an evidence bag and said, "Can I get through, please?" Lassiter pressed up against the shelves to let her by, and Spencer had done the same but instead of moving next to Lassiter he'd squeezed right on top of him. O'Hara was momentarily bottlenecked, but fought her way free and out to the car. The problem was that in those few seconds, Spencer's backside pressed firmly against Lassiter's front side. And in the immortal words of George Costanza, *it moved*.

Since that moment, every second Lassiter spent near Spencer had been torture. At first he was preoccupied with the immediate repercussions. Had Spencer noticed? Surely not. If he'd noticed he'd have said something smart-mouthed, like "Is that a nightstick in your pocket?" He'd given Lassiter a look, though. He was certain there'd been a look. It wasn't confusion or disgust or annoyance. It was almost as if he'd never met Lassiter before and couldn't figure out how he got into the store. That, of course, made no sense. As time passed and Spencer didn't mention the incident, his anxiety grew. Clearly he would mention it at some future point, probably when Lassiter was surrounded by co-workers. Maybe in front of the Chief.

Lassiter had combed through his mind for some explanation of this physical reaction. *It doesn't mean I'm attracted to Spencer*, he'd told himself. *It's been so long since I had sex that I'd become aroused by a strong breeze. Maybe I was responding to O'Hara. She's an attractive woman. Or maybe this is a suicidal drive of some kind leading me to sexually fixate on the person who could most easily ruin my career.* None of the explanations offered any comfort. He found himself wishing that he'd had some youthful same-sex exploration to fall back on. Maybe then this sudden infatuation wouldn't be so alarming. As it was, the closest thing he'd had to a gay experience was having a poster of Steve McQueen from *The Getaway* on his wall for a year and a half in junior high. The Cruickshanks incident left him hyper-aware of Spencer's presence and vaguely horny every time the psychic was around. It was as if the fake suicide note had become a

prophecy that Lassiter's body was determined to fulfill.

Worst of all, Lassiter couldn't be sure that Spencer wasn't reading his mind—or whatever it was that he did. He had always been touchy-feely around the station, particularly when he was in the grip of a 'vision.' But in the week after the Cruickshanks case each touch seemed to taunt him with some secret knowledge. Spencer had touched Lassiter's face and held his hand there for what seemed like forever, claiming he saw visions of yellow brick roads and tiny little people. He'd placed his hand on Lassiter's chest and suggested he come to Emerald City with him and ask the Wizard for a heart. It was alarming and arousing, and more than a little confusing. He'd only seen the Wizard of Oz once, as a child, and he didn't remember much beyond the singing munchkins and the terrifying flying monkeys. Spencer's whole song-and-dance made more sense later, when they had arrested the victim's neighbour, who Lassiter had to admit, did kind of resemble Margaret Hamilton.

Chapter 2

Despite being a fraud and a flake, Spencer got results. But the kind of results he'd been getting lately were entirely too problematic. *Maybe if Spencer kept a normal distance, he thought, the sexual tension could re-submerge into whatever dark recess of his psyche it had come from.*

He tried verbally rebuffing Spencer, but his orders to stay off his desk, stop touching him, or remain outside the imaginary hula-hoop of personal space were ignored. Most recently, Spencer had walked up casually behind him, placed both hands on his shoulders, commented on how tense Lassiter was, and started massaging him with surprising skill. Lassiter's physical response was to lean into the massage, but his mental response was anger that Spencer had again ignored his boundaries and did so in full view of his co-workers. *How many of them are thinking Drimmer had it right?* He wondered. *Hell, even I'm wondering if he had it right.* This kind of speculation could undermine his authority in the station. This whole Spencer thing had to stop now.

Lassiter spun in his chair, grabbed Spencer by the back of the neck and pulled him off to a secluded corner near the stairs. *There was no reason everyone had to see this.*

"You just don't get the message, do you Spencer?" Lassiter backed him up against the wall and leaned in. "This is my workplace," he said through gritted teeth. "I'm in a position of authority here. Why can't you just respect what I do, even if you can't respect me as a person?"

Shawn was smiling, as if the whole thing was a joke. *I should have known this couldn't be solved without violence,* Lassiter thought. He grabbed Shawn by the biceps and slammed him against the wall. *That was a little too hard,* he said to himself, but then stifled the thought. *Better too hard than not hard enough.*

"Leave. Me. Alone." Lassiter looked Shawn in the eyes so he couldn't misunderstand or laugh off the message. He saw surprise, and a large helping of hurt, but Spencer wouldn't get the message if it were less blunt. "Stop following me. Stop touching me. Just stay—away." Lassiter punctuated this last word with a second slam into the wall. This time Shawn actually winced, and Lassiter felt guilty as he turned and walked back to his desk, leaving Spencer rubbing his bruised arms and looking after him with confusion, surprise and something Lassiter might have recognized as curiosity.

Shawn's doctor had told him that he had a mild concussion as a result of the blows to the head Drimmer had given him, and said that he might experience headaches, irritability and lack of mental acuity. But the week since the Drimmer incident was turning out to be one of his most perceptive ever. To begin with, head detective Lassiter, who should have been basking in the glory of having taken down a dirty cop, solved two murders, and saved the life of a valued police consultant, was instead having a meltdown. And not the

good kind.

Whenever he came into the station lately, Lassie was watching him. It wasn't the kind of look that said he knew Shawn had been stealing their pens (he had), or that he'd figured out how his psychic powers worked. No, this look was different. It was slightly fearful, which was completely out of character for Lassie.

The fear in Lassie's eyes bothered Shawn. He genuinely liked Lassiter. Sure, the guy had been a pain in the beginning, what with trying to arrest him, his territorial possessiveness of the station, and his trying to get Shawn fired from every case. But he'd solved a lot of cases for the department since then and he kind of thought Lassiter liked him, at least a little. He'd certainly come to appreciate Lassiter. Since that evening in Tom Blair's Pub where Lassie had admitted that Shawn astounded him, he'd felt that they had reached an understanding. Lassie recognized him as a real detective, even if he couldn't figure out how he did it. For all his by-the-book attitude, inside he was a warm guy with a strong character. Which was why Shawn knew that Lassie hadn't shot Chavez. That kind of move wasn't in him. He was surprised that the Chief and O'Hara hadn't been more certain since they worked with him every day. But then again he was used to seeing more than other people did.

Sometimes his insight extended even to himself. He accepted, for example, that he was attracted to Lassiter. The detective had strong features, dreamy blue eyes and kept himself in good physical condition. His ability with a gun wasn't exactly a turn-off either. He was used to the odd unrequited man-crush, so it didn't bother him that Lassiter wasn't feeling the love. When he'd returned his shirt, freshly washed and folded, Shawn hadn't hung it with his other shirts. It smelled like Lassiter's laundry detergent; he'd put it in his underwear drawer.

When Lassiter thought Shawn wasn't looking at him his expression took on a distinctively guilty look. Initially Shawn thought the detective was feeling bad that he hadn't prevented Drimmer from hitting him with his gun and trying to kill him. *Perhaps*, he thought, *I haven't shown him how grateful I am that he saved my life*. Shawn brought him lunch, coffee and an almond croissant, but the detective looked worse with each gift.

"So what's up with Lassie," Shawn asked O'Hara over lunchtime Pad Thai. "He looks like he's kidnapped the Lindberg baby."

"He's upset that people would have believed the fake suicide note," O'Hara told him. "But don't let on that I said anything."

"My lips are sealed. Besides, I think you'd have figured it out, Jules." Shawn smiled reassuringly at the junior detective.

"You do?"

"Sure. You know Lassie couldn't have hidden our torrid affair from you. He's transparent

like...like...Wonder Woman's airplane."

"Thanks. I'd like to think I'm perceptive, especially when it comes to my own partner. He's trying not to show it, but he's pretty freaked out by Drimmer's idea to portray the two of you as gay lovers."

"Really? I'd think he'd be flattered. I mean, wouldn't it be more reasonable that I'd be with someone like Buzz? He's young, he's friendly. He can carry heavy things."

Juliet laughed. "You'd have no shot with McNab."

"You bitch!" Shawn teased. "I totally would. Provided I could get him to understand what I was suggesting. I admit, having to be that blunt is beneath my subtle style of seduction, but I could sacrifice style in a pinch."

"You're many things, Shawn, but subtle isn't one of them," O'Hara said as she led the way back to the station.

Chapter 3

And then there had been the Cruickshanks case. A woman had been bludgeoned with a big red shoe. The crime scene was reminiscent of the end of Raiders of the Lost Ark, if the government warehouse had been devoted exclusively to groceries. Lassiter had been doodling in his notebook. Shawn had been working up to his big reveal that the neighbour had done the deed. The neighbour's window looked right onto the storage room. The storage room window had recently been opened, and someone wearing a men's size ten had stepped onto the sill. Yet it was closed and locked from the inside. Based on the empty bottle of wine in the recycling bin, the hand marks on the dusty shelving, and the used condom in the trash, someone had been having a steamy affair in this little storage area. Neighbour sees affair, neighbour recognizes husband. Neighbour storms into store, husband flees through window, lover closes and locks window after boyfriend. Neighbour kills rival.

Neither Lassiter nor O'Hara was clueing in to his use of the Wizard of Oz imagery, even after he'd led them to the murder weapon, a ruby slipper—well, a red platform wedge heel, which was close enough. Shawn had backed up to let O'Hara by with the evidence only to discover Carlton somehow pinned behind him. At this point Shawn didn't really notice much of anything other than Lassiter's body flush against him, particularly since part of that body was jabbing him in the lower back. Shawn had looked at Lassiter, slightly confused at first.

Was that about Juliet, or was that about me? And if it was about me, what was Lassiter willing to do about it?

Shawn increased the amount he touched Lassiter, hoping to spur him into starting the conversation they seemed to be on the brink of having. Lassiter had kept up the usual bluff litany of "get away" and "stay off my desk." But the way his eyes kept following Shawn around the room was suggesting that he didn't want Shawn to go very far away. When he spotted Lassiter hunched over his paperwork, a little ball of tension and stress, he'd strolled up behind him and put his hands on the detective's rigid shoulders.

"You are so tense, Lassie," he said, and started some basic massage movements. Lassiter didn't object, and was actually starting to relax when suddenly his muscles tensed again and he spun his chair to face Spencer. He was jumpy. He was constantly looking around him, as if he expected to catch his co-workers talking about him. *Hello Paranoia!*

Lassiter grabbed him by his shirt collar and pulled him into a nook by the stairs. Shawn didn't think they were about to have that talk he'd wanted.

"You just don't get the message, do you Spencer?" Lassiter backed Shawn up against the wall and leaned in. His close proximity seemed to belie his statements. "This is my workplace," he said through gritted teeth. "I'm in a position of authority here." *Does that mean I could massage you if we weren't at work?* Shawn wondered. He smiled at the possibility.

Lassiter embraced him and body slammed him against the wall. It hurt, but was also strangely sexual, given the charged energy between them.

“Leave. Me. Alone.” Lassiter gave Shawn a look that seemed at once angry and desperately pleading. “Stop following me. Stop touching me. Just stay...away.” Lassiter slammed him a second time, catching the nerve in his elbow and making his arm go slightly numb for a moment. Lassiter walked back to his desk without bothering to look back.

Shawn watched, intrigued that something had pushed the detective to this show of force. *What was really going on behind those heavy lids*, Shawn wondered. And did any of it mean that his crush might not be so unrequited after all?

“The Chief wants to see you,” O’Hara said. The look on her face suggested that Lassiter was about to be informed that he was terminally ill. *Great*, Lassiter thought, *Maybe Spencer ratted on me for slamming him into the wall. Or maybe Detective Ocampo from Internal Affairs has written his report on the Drimmer shooting.*

Lassiter knocked on Chief Karen Vick’s door as he entered. She looked up from some paperwork she’d been reading.

“Come in Carlton. Have a seat.” *She was using his first name, telling him she wasn’t just his boss, but a friend too. That didn’t bode well.*

“I don’t anticipate any problems with Internal Affairs resulting from the Drimmer situation.”

“I’m glad to hear that.” Lassiter felt confused. *If everything was fine, why the ‘poor you’ face on O’Hara?*

“We all are. Congratulations.”

“It was a joint effort. Spencer distracted him, I just happened to have a gun.”

“Apparently you had several guns that our search failed to find.” Vick smiled wryly. “Nice work, Detective.”

“Thanks.”

Vick took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Clearly, she wasn’t done yet.

“This is in no way a reflection on you, but given recent events I think you should take a few days off. Days off in which you actually leave the station and don’t return. Now

before you object, studies have shown—”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Lassiter cut in. “I could use some time off to process what’s happened.” *And I could use some time to get a lid on this libido issue*, he thought.

“I’m glad to hear you say that, Detective,” Vick said, not bothering to hide the tone of surprise in her voice.

“No problem.” Lassiter said. “I’ll be back Monday morning with my head back in the game.”

“See you Monday then. And not before. So help me, Carlton if you come in here before Monday I will have you sent to Workaholics Anonymous.”

“I won’t even call in for messages,” Lassiter promised. *Besides*, he reasoned, *I can always check my email from home*.

Lassiter didn’t have many friends, although he had a lot of acquaintances. Most of them were other cops. Normally when he faced a serious dilemma he could count on John Fenich, former chief of the SBPD, now retired. But while he could talk to Chief Fenich about the job, his marriage, and his divorce, he didn’t think the old man would be particularly helpful on the subject of his homosexual attraction to an annoying co-worker. He could almost hear him now, *What the hell, Carlton? Are you trying to flush your career down the shitter?*

There were cops in the department he’d heard were gay, but he couldn’t just walk up to one of them and start asking personal questions. What would he even say? *I hear you’re gay. Can you reassure me that I’m not?* He was pretty sure that would get him a sexual harassment suit that would make O’Hara’s Muffingate debacle look like a walk in the park.

There was one person who might understand, but he hadn’t talked to him since his academy days. Lassiter dug out his address book. Russell Santos had been out as gay in the academy and now lived in San Francisco with his husband. Santos worked in the SFPD’s burglary unit. He knew what it was like to be a gay man in the force. More importantly for Lassiter, their conversation was unlikely to get back to anyone at the station in Santa Barbara. He punched in the numbers and took a deep breath.

The next morning Lassiter left his house at 10 a.m. and began winding his way along Garden St. to Highway 101. Six hours later, which had included a stop for lunch, he was pulling into a parking lot across from the San Francisco Hilton, on O’Farrell Street. He checked in and took a hot shower to relax his muscles, stiff from driving. Dinner with Russell and his husband was at 7 p.m. He had time to kill. He lay on the edge of the bed and turned on the television. The Sleuth channel was playing NCIS.

Chapter 4

“I can’t believe you talked me into this, Shawn.” Gus pulled the blue Echo off Highway 101 and onto Shoreline Boulevard.

“As I recall, you were eager to go,” Shawn said.

“You said it was for a case.” Gus was wearing his grey suit, pink shirt and maroon tie. He’d chosen them to highlight his perfect skin, since he was prepared for a day of promoting a new acne medication. Shawn, knowing they would both be sitting in a car all day, had chosen a comfortable pair of jeans, cherry red shirt and a black hoodie. The latter made the outfit a day-to-night look.

“It is for a case. The Forty-Niners dolphin is missing and Lassiter has to find it.”

“That’s the plot to Ace Ventura, Pet Detective.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Yes, it is. We watched it just last week. And the Forty-Niners mascot isn’t a dolphin, it’s a prospector named Sourdough Sam.”

“It bothers me that you know that,” Shawn said.

“It’s common knowledge.”

Shawn reflected, not for the first time that Gus’ idea of common knowledge was rather skewed. The Amish, for example had likely never heard of Sourdough Sam.

“Okay, so it isn’t a missing dolphin. It’s still a case.”

“Really?”

“Sure. It’s the case of the vacationing workaholic. I don’t think there’s a fee in it, but think of the personal satisfaction. Frank and Joe Hardy never got paid, you know.”

“They were in high school. They lived with their parents. I have rent to pay.”

“Just enjoy the drive.”

“He’s not even taking the scenic route, Shawn.” Gus settled into a silent funk from which even Shawn’s most enthusiastic prodding could not move him. True to his helpful nature though, he didn’t turn the car around.

They had tailed Lassiter’s Crown Vic for three hours before the detective stopped for lunch. While Lassiter ate, Shawn and Gus remained in their car discretely parked at a

nearby gas station, dining on what they could buy from the gas bar's limited snack selection. Shawn pulled a paper bag out of the glove compartment and offered it to Gus.

"Gummy worm?"

"I'm not in the mood." Gus turned his head and refused to look at him.

"They're not worm flavoured, you know," Shawn said, "They're gummy flavoured."

"Gummy isn't a flavour."

When Lassiter pulled into the parking lot across from the Hilton Gus circled the block.

"What's your plan now, Columbo?" Gus asked. "Check into the room next door and drill a hole so you can spy on him? Or maybe spend all night with your ear to a drinking glass against the wall, listening to him watch pay per view?"

"I was thinking of installing a listening device and a two-way mirror, maybe delivering some room service while wearing a prosthetic face. But it's more a job for the Impossible Mission Force than Columbo. I'll be Jim Phelps, you can be Barney Collier."

"Barney's a mechanical engineer. He's too damn smart to get sucked into your plan, as am I. I have work to do, Shawn. Paid employment. Plus, I have a very long drive home, which I have to do all by myself."

"I offered to take turns driving,"

"I am not letting you drive my car, Shawn."

"I'm an excellent driver."

"Which one of us has crashed his motorcycle twice in the past three years?" Shawn reluctantly raised his hand. "I rest my case."

"You're right, Gus. Let me out here and I'll tail Lassiter all by my lonesome."

"Fine by me. If I leave now I can get back in time for bed. Thank-you for this lovely day," Gus said sarcastically. "The next time you want to tail someone for three hundred miles you can take the bus."

"Okay, but I'm keeping the gummy worms." Shawn stuffed the bag into his backpack, then stepped out of the car. As the Echo drove away Shawn crossed the street and entered the hotel.

"Hello, and welcome to the Hilton." The clerk was a tall blonde woman in a dark blue suit wearing a small gold nametag that said Marie.

“Thanks, Marie. I’m Cassidy Stevens, staying at the Four Seasons for the model railroad convention. I’m supposed to be setting up a Z scale model with Carlton Lassiter this evening. Can you tell me if he’s checked in yet?”

She checked her computer registration system.

“Yes, he’s already arrived. Did you want me to call up to his room?”

“No no no. That’s not necessary. I’ve already started on the village and he can come by later to set up the little people. He’s more of a fan of the H0 scale trains, but I think I’m winning him over to Z scale. I mean, H0 is so large, you may as well own a real train, am I right?” Shawn smiled his most charming smile and threw his arms wide, welcoming the clerk’s trust and goodwill.

Marie laughed, whether at or with him, Shawn wasn’t sure. “Did you want to leave a message?”

“No, but I would like to leave something for him if I may.” Shawn handed her his small black backpack. “Please be very careful with this, Marie. It contains our entry for the Casey Jones 384 model contest. I think we have a good chance of winning this year. Last year’s winner is home with the Chattanooga flu. Just hold it here until Lassiter calls for it.”

“No problem,” the clerk took the bag. “Good luck with your contest.”

“Thanks. In the meantime I’ll take advantage of your lovely bar.”

When Lassiter left the hotel an hour later, wearing his charcoal suit, white shirt and blue spotted tie, Shawn was behind him, tailing at a discrete distance and wishing he’d thought to bring a disguise.

Russell Santos lived with his husband, Eric in a two-storey pseudo-Victorian on Douglas Street, just west of the Castro. Russ welcomed him in and accepted the Australian Cabernet-Merlot that Lassiter had picked up on the way from the hotel. He looked pretty much as he had at the academy; tall, fit and tanned, but his wavy dark hair now had some streaks of grey coming in at the sides.

“Carlton, you remember my husband, Eric.” Coming from Russell it could be either a statement or a question.

“Yes, of course. Thanks for having me over.” Eric was slightly shorter than Russell, with close-cropped grey hair and glasses. He was an accountant, and he looked like one.

Half way through the pasta arrabbiata Russell decided to cut to the chase.

“You’re not the only cop in the room Carlton. What’s up? Why are you here? And before you launch into some lie, I know it’s not just to touch base with an old friend.”

“You are an old friend. What’s wrong with touching base?” Lassiter took a sip of wine. He had thought about what he would say all the way up in the car, but none of it was going as he’d hoped.

“We exchange cards at Christmas. I have closer friends on Facebook.” Russell looked at Carlton with the unwavering stare he used on burglary suspects. “What gives with your sudden interest in getting together?”

Carlton crammed a forkful of pasta into his mouth to give himself time to think. The idea of visiting Russ, which had seemed so logical in Santa Barbara suddenly felt completely dim-witted and intrusive. Still, since he had made a fool of himself already, he may as well reap whatever benefits there were to be had.

“Well, as you know, Victoria and I aren’t together anymore. And I’ve been working a lot, and lately I’ve been having a...problem that I thought you could help me with.”

“A work problem?”

“Kind of. There’s this guy I work with—“

“Another cop?” Russell cut in.

“No! No no no. He’s a consultant. He’s annoying. He’s an immature attention-seeking slacker. But the chief thinks the sun shines out of his butt, and he’s around a lot.”

“And you want me to tell you how to get rid of him?” Russell asked, confused.

“Can we let the man finish a thought?” Eric asked his husband. Russell grunted an affirmative and dug into his pasta, eyes still on Carlton.

“The problem isn’t just him,” Lassiter explained. “It’s me. Well, it’s him too. He’s always grabbing me and calling me ‘Lassie’ and sitting on my desk and getting in my personal space. One time he even sat in my lap.” He was pretty sure he sounded as ridiculous as he felt. He spoke faster, trying to get all the words out before he changed his mind. “And now I think I’m attracted to him.”

Russell looked at Lassiter with an expression somewhere between disbelief and horror. When he didn’t respond Lassiter continued.

“And I hoped that you could help me figure out why I’m suddenly gay before I’m outed to the whole station.”

“Well, this isn’t what I expected,” Eric said. He glanced from Russell to Lassiter and back again, riveted. “We thought you wanted to borrow money or sell us Amway products.”

“You’re not gay, Carlton,” Russell said. “Trust me, I ought to know.”

“But how can you be sure? I mean, this feels pretty real. I’m hyperaware of his presence in the station, and a couple of times lately when he’s initiated these physical interactions, I’ve, uh, had to think about baseball.”

“Being gay isn’t something that sneaks up on you, Carlton. You either are or you aren’t. And you’re definitely not.”

“That’s a relief.” Lassiter leaned back in his chair and let out a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding in. “No offence, Russ, or to you Eric.”

“None taken. I’m relieved you’re not gay too,” Russell said.

“So what’s going on with Spenc—with this guy at work?” Lassiter asked. “If I’m not gay why am I fixated on another man?”

“I don’t know.” Russell ran a hand through his hair and sighed. “If I had to guess, you’re probably not ready to have a relationship with a woman so soon after the divorce, but you’re still a man with a sex drive, and this is your brain’s way of killing time until you’re ready. It’s a crush, just to keep your libido in practice. You subconsciously chose someone you know is impossible. Hell, it sounds like you don’t even like the guy.”

“Right.” Lassiter ran the idea over in his mind. What Russ said sounded logical, and it did have the advantage of not turning the world as he knew it completely inside out. “So I’m not just... turning gay?” He asked.

“You want to know for sure how *not gay* you are, Carlton?” Russell began, “Go to any gay bar in town.”

“And what? Pick up some guy?”

“Hell no,” Russell laughed. “You’ll know how un-gay you are before anyone even talks to you. Tell you what—if you actually dance with a guy, I’ll give you twenty bucks. Tell me all about it in this year’s Christmas card and I’ll mail it to you.”

“I don’t really do dancing.”

“Okay then... first kiss. If you kiss a guy I owe you...\$50. Seriously, it’s not going to happen. You’ll know that you’re not a friend of Dorothy within two minutes of entering the bar.”

Russell's words reminded Lassiter of Spencer's Wizard of Oz routine, which he quickly pushed to the back of his mind. *I don't need the Wizard to give me a heart. What exactly was Spencer implying?*

"Don't walk into just any bar," Eric said, bringing him out of his reverie. "They're not all the same."

"That's for sure. Don't go to Daddy's Bar," Russell said. "Unless you're in uniform, of course. That might blend."

"Well don't go to Lucky 13 or The Mix," said Eric. "They're dives. Go somewhere like Twin Peaks."

"What's Twin Peaks like?" Lassiter asked.

"It's like Cheers, but filled with gay people over 50."

"The plus side is there's no dancing," Russell said. "You can just sit and observe."

"The upstairs is nice," Eric said. "The women's washroom smells like cookies!"

"I won't be going in the women's washroom," Lassiter assured them. *But I might go to the bar, he added to himself.*

Chapter 5

Outside on Douglas Street, Shawn slowly circled the house, looking for a good vantage point. He found one on the roof of a neighbour's detached garage, which gave a view directly into the room where Lassiter was eating dinner with two other men, both in their late thirties or early forties. Shawn quickly scanned the contents of the room. Based on the pictures on the wall, the dark haired man, who looked like a young J. Jonah Jameson, was a cop. He and Lassiter were doing most of the talking. The other guy looked like an accountant, a hypothesis supported by the antique adding machine on the top shelf of the bookcase at the end of the room.

They were also completely gay, and based on their body language, a couple.

Curiouser and curiouser, Shawn said to himself. He zipped up his hoodie and settled in to watch, wishing he could see well enough to read their lips. To kill time he entertained himself by making up what he imagined they were saying. He wasn't as far off as he thought.

Lassiter helped clear the table while Russell took out the garbage. As they loaded the dishwasher, Eric leaned over and spoke in a low voice.

"Listen, don't take what Russ said too much to heart. He gets a little militant about the gay/straight divide. He's been gay since day one. His parents used to find his G.I. Joes under the bed with all their clothes off."

"And you haven't? Always been gay, I mean?" Lassiter looked at Eric. He had a feeling this conversation was about to undercut the relief he was feeling.

"I lived with a woman for six years before Russell and I got together," Eric said. "I wasn't in the closet all that time. I was in love."

Lassiter closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. "I just don't know how you make that kind of adjustment. I've always been straight. I've always felt straight. And now it's like there's been some kind of switch flicked in my head." *And other parts*, Lassiter could have added, but didn't.

"Not being completely straight doesn't mean you're suddenly completely gay," Eric said. "Figure out where you're at on the spectrum and be okay with it. And please, stop looking like you just boarded the last bus to gaytown."

"Uh, thanks. I'll try to seem more enthusiastic about my possible homosexuality," Lassiter said dryly.

"But if things work out between you and Spence, or whoever" Eric said. "I want an invite

to the wedding.”

Lassiter walked past the Twin Peaks Tavern on Castro Street. Again. A large arrow sign made of light bulbs pointed to the door, which he had failed to enter on his last two passes. Third time's the charm, he thought, and forced himself to grasp the handle and enter the bar.

It was certainly ornate. Corinthian columns and Roman arches framed a mirror behind the bar. Leaded glass lampshades hung from the ceiling and leaded lamps graced some of the tables. He ordered a scotch and paid in cash. He didn't want a record of this excursion to appear on his credit card bill later on. It might make it feel real. He took his drink and little square napkin to a table by the window where he would have a good view of the bar and the street. Most of the men inside were slightly older than he was, sitting in groups of two and three. He sipped his scotch, looked out the window, and began to relax. It was just a bar, like other bars. Best of all, he wasn't finding anybody attractive. He looked experimentally at a few of the guys loitering on the sidewalk. They were in good physical condition. They were nicely dressed. But they weren't turning him on. *Russ was right*, he reassured himself. *I don't fit in here. This was all a ridiculous over-reaction.* He almost laughed with relief and at himself for having driven over six hours for this.

He hadn't noticed the door open, so he was particularly startled when a body slid into a chair next to him and leaned into his personal space. He instinctively went for the spot in his jacket where his gun usually was, but quickly realized that the new arrival was Shawn Spencer.

“So...” Spencer looked around the bar casually before turning to meet Lassiter's eyes full on. “Exactly how gay are you, Lassie? Neil Patrick Harris gay? Or handbag full of rainbows gay? I'm guessing somewhere just east of heteroflexible. Am I close?”

“What the hell are you doing here, Spencer?”

“Isn't it obvious? I'm following you.” He smiled as if this was a fabulous present he had just given Lassiter. “You must really be preoccupied, Lassie. I've been on your ass, so to speak, since we left Santa Barbara.”

“I thought I'd made it clear that I wanted you to leave me alone.” He put as much menace into the line as he could.

“That's kind of what prompted me to follow you, actually,” Spencer said. “It was way out of character for you. You actually hurt my arm. I have a bruise and everything.” He raised his elbow to display it.

“I'm not going to talk to you about this Spencer. Go away.”

“How long have you been making these little trips? Clark Kenting it up at work all week and then changing into your alter ego on the weekend. Do you have a drag name? Is it Heidi Candy?”

“It’s things like this that reinforce what a crock this psychic act of yours is. You’ve got it all wrong, as usual.”

“I’m just kidding, Lassie. Anyone could tell it’s your first time in a gay bar. You’re tense, you’re sweating, your body language is all crossed arms and legs—very defensive. And you’re gripping your glass as if you’re holding the safety handle on a grenade. That guy at the end of the bar has been eyefucking you since I entered, but you haven’t even noticed.”

“I’m not interested in being eyefucked,” Lassiter said. “Or anything else.”

“Level with me, Detective.” Spencer asked. “Is this work? Are you here on a case, or is this some kind of gaycation?”

Lassiter was tempted to take the excuse Spencer had offered, and pretend he was following a lead, or consulting with SFPD. But he could see that plan leading into some complicated Three’s Company style charade, where Spencer insisted on helping him trail a non-existent suspect.

“I’m taking a *vacation*,” Lassiter emphasized the syllable, “and visiting a friend from the academy. I didn’t expect to be tailed simply because I happened to take a few days off. Now if you don’t mind, I’d like to finish my drink without the third degree.”

“Your friend, the gay cop, and his husband the accountant,” Spencer began.

“How do—”

“And your drink,” he continued, “that you just happen to be having in the gayest part of the gayest city in the country.”

“Is it? I hadn’t noticed.” Lassiter sipped his scotch, looking for a way to change the subject.

“Okay, you just like gay bars. Here’s a tip: any woman over six feet tall in this part of town is probably a dude. But seriously, Lassie, Twin Peaks? How old do you think you are? We should go to Lucky 13.”

“I hear it’s a dive.”

“But they have free popcorn. And a photo booth. How cool is that?”

“There is nothing about this evening that I want to preserve in film, Spencer.”

“Then let’s go to your hotel, ‘cause Gus went home and I haven’t got a ride back. Also I haven’t got any money, and you’re the only person I know in San Francisco.”

Lassiter considered for a moment. He wasn’t near drunk enough to think that inviting Spencer back to his hotel was a good plan. At least, he wasn’t drunk enough yet.

“Where’s this Lucky 13 then?” he asked.

The Lucky 13 was a long low-lit building with red and black walls and matching tables dotted with candles in glass jars. The majority of the patrons seemed to be straight. The clientele was heavy on tattoos, black t-shirts, studded belts, and dyed hair. *They look like criminals*, Lassiter thought. *No wonder Spencer likes the place.*

Spencer went to the long bar and ordered a Hoegaarden and a Glenfiddich, then led the way off into the dark. Lassiter followed him, noting that his claim to not have any money wasn’t entirely accurate, and joined him at a table in the back.

They sat there in the dark, sipping their drinks and not looking at each other.

“Is this about Drimmer?” Spencer asked suddenly.

“What makes you think that?” *Damn that O’Hara! How much has she told him?*

“You haven’t been yourself since he tried to kill us. I’m pretty sure it’s not the near-death experience; you let that sort of thing roll right off. So I think it’s the fact that he implied we were lightening one another’s loafers. Am I right?”

“Now that you mention it,” Lassiter said sarcastically, “I am kind of bothered by the idea that all my co-workers would have believed I killed my gay lover in a murder-suicide.” He shifted to a more serious tone. “I thought they actually knew me.”

“Why do you care so much about what people do or don’t think?”

“This is my career I’m talking about Spencer, not just some temp job I’m doing for kicks. I don’t expect you to get it.”

“Oh I get it. I’ve been getting it my whole life. What I don’t get is your caring about whether or not people believe a dirty cop’s fantasies about your sex life.”

“I care about what my co-workers think of me. I care about getting promoted. I’m the youngest head detective in the history of the force. I could be Chief someday.”

“Do Police Chiefs still get a two-way wrist radio, or do you just call Dick Tracy on his cell now?”

“I know that what I do is a colossal joke to you Spencer, but it’s my life.”

Spencer looked him straight in the eyes.

“I don’t think what you do is a joke, Lassie. You saved my life. I think you’re great.” He put his arm along the edge of Lassiter’s chair and leaned in closer to his ear. “And while Drimmer may have been a murdering psycho and a very bad dresser, he was only half wrong about us.”

Lassiter turned his head toward Spencer in surprise. Their lips were almost grazing and Spencer waited there, daring Lassiter to meet him the rest of the way. In the two seconds it took for Lassiter to respond his brain held an argument with itself.

Goddamn it, Carlton, Back away from the lips. This is insane. You’re in a public place. Anyone could see you.

Nobody here knows you or cares what you’re doing. This is a very dark corner.

But this is Spencer. And he can’t keep his mouth shut to save his life. He’d probably text Guster the news before the two of you left the bar.

But ignoring it hasn’t made it go away. Maybe this is real or maybe it’s not. Either way, I have to know for sure.

Their lips met tentatively, as if each expected the other to pull away in alarm. When neither of them did, Shawn got bolder, his hand moved up to cup the back of Lassiter’s head, and his fingers combed through the detective’s short hair. His tongue nudged forward and cautiously explored Lassiter’s mouth. Lassiter moaned slightly and responded in kind. Shawn tasted like beer and his stubble felt like sandpaper, but it wasn’t a turn-off. On the contrary, blood was rushing through his head and lower extremities. There had been an element of the forbidden in his relationship with Detective Lucinda Barry. She’d been his co-worker and his partner and dating her was strictly against the books. Kissing Shawn crossed all kinds of boundaries, yet this was the horniest he’d been in years. *Am I developing some kind of fetish?* He wondered. *Am I only attracted to people I’m not supposed to want?*

Finally they pulled away and Lassiter began to laugh.

“Something funny, Lassie?” Shawn looked at him with a tilt to his head. He was slightly breathless.

“I just realized that a friend of mine owes me \$50.” Lassiter took a slug of his scotch and leaned back in his chair.

“You know what we should do?” Shawn looked at him with shiny excited eyes.

“No. What?”

Shawn grabbed his beer, stood up, and walked over to lean against the empty pool table.

“We should play pool. I bet you handle a stick like a pro.” He ran his hand over the red felt in the spotlight of the table and smiled at Lassiter.

Lassiter pushed his chair back and stood up. He felt slightly unsteady on his feet, but it had nothing to do with the scotch.

“Actually, I am an excellent pool player. I will ignore your cheesy double entendre.”

They played three games, with Shawn winning each one by a greater margin. Lassiter wanted to blame the booze, but wasn't that drunk. Spencer's last shot was spectacular as each ball dropped one after the other into the pockets as if they'd been choreographed.

“I've got an idea,” Lassiter said. He began to remove his tie. Shawn looked around and smiled nervously.

“Does it involve throttling me and dumping my body under the pool table?”

Lassiter approached Shawn with the tie held tautly in his hands. He was thinking of when Shawn had blindfolded him in the Psych office, looking for the clues his other senses had picked up. Lassiter didn't close his eyes for anyone, but he'd done that for Shawn.

“What's the matter? Don't you trust me any more?” He walked up to Shawn, getting into his personal space and enjoying the sense that for once it was him who was off kilter. He grabbed Shawn by the shoulders and spun him around to face the pool table.

“You didn't see this in a movie, did you, Lassie?” Shawn asked nervously.

“Shut up, Spencer. You'll need all your senses for this.” He wrapped the tie around Spencer's eyes, blindfolding him and tied it gently but firmly at the back of his head. He pulled the pool balls out of the pockets and set them up where they'd been. “Now let's see you make that shot again.”

“Interesting. What do I win if I can?” Shawn asked, leaning back against Lassiter's body, reminding him briefly of the Cruickshanks case, but with less panic and more anticipation.

“I'll drive you back to Santa Barbara tomorrow.” He spoke low against Shawn's neck, willing himself not to kiss him while he was blindfolded and disoriented.

Shawn smiled and groped his hand over the pool table to get his bearings. Lassiter stepped back.

“I call shotgun. Of course, knowing you, that may entail holding an actual shotgun.” He felt the cue ball, lined up the stick and took the shot. Lassiter watched in astonishment as the balls repeated their intricate dance, each dropping firmly into the pockets.

“Do I still astound you, detective?” Shawn asked as he pulled off the blindfold.

“More all the time,” Lassiter said.

Chapter 6

At 2:00 a.m. Lassiter entered the lobby of the Hilton and attempted to move as discreetly as possible directly to the elevators. Shawn was trailing behind him, not particularly caring about being unobtrusive.

“Have you ever realized how much this place looks like a gigantic Whitmans Sampler box?” Shawn asked loudly. Lassiter was about to press the button for the elevators when Shawn checked his hand. “Hold up a minute, Lassie. There’s a package for you at the front desk.”

“How do you know?”

“Psychic, remember? Also, I’m the one who left it.”

Lassiter returned carrying Shawn’s small black backpack.

“Very funny, Spencer. Don’t you take a lot for granted.”

They entered Lassiter’s room and he bolted the door and put the safety lock across. This is one evening he didn’t want interrupted. He momentarily considered bracing a chair under the handle as well but thought it might convey the wrong message to Spencer. *Like, I’m about to do something terrible to you.* The fact was, he wasn’t entirely sure what they were about to do, only that it was going to be very sexual.

Shawn stepped forward and embraced Lassiter in a ferocious lip lock. The two men stumbled in the direction of the bed. Lassiter pulled Shawn’s hoodie off and dropped it to the floor. He ran his hands up the back of his t-shirt, pressing him against his chest. He could feel their hearts pounding.

Shawn fell backwards onto the bed and lay there, looking up at him with dilated pupils and a flushed face. Lassiter had a dozen questions running through his head, but he wasn’t about to ask any of them. Somehow the idea of talking at this point seemed counterintuitive. If he said anything, maybe Spencer would suddenly realize what was about to happen (was happening now) and come to his senses.

Lassiter pulled off his tie and fumbled with the buttons of his shirt, tossing them both onto a nearby chair. Shawn sat forward and grabbed Lassiter by the waistband of his pants and pulled him within reach. He quickly undid his belt and pants. They dropped to his ankles, exposing blue boxers upon which a large wet patch revealed his anticipation.

Lassiter placed his hand on Shawn’s chest and pushed him back on to the bed. Tonight wasn’t about being serviced. That’s what gay-while-drunk straight guys did. If he was going to know for certain what was going on between him and Spencer he was going to have to take a more active role.

Getting the message, Shawn quickly began to undress. He kicked off his shoes and socks, and then pulled his t-shirt up and off, tossing it across the room. Lassiter pushed off his shoes and socks, stepped out of his pants and climbed onto the bed. He grabbed Shawn's jeans and forced them open with a firm twist and tug. Shawn lifted his hips slightly and Lassiter pulled the jeans down and off, dragging the boxers with them. He dropped them to the floor and turned his attention to Shawn's naked body and straining erection.

Shawn leaned forward grabbed Lassiter by the shoulders, pulling him down on top of him with a groan of impatience. Their lips locked in a kiss that was simultaneously promising and demanding. Lassiter's hands roamed over Shawn's body, exploring his chest, hips and thighs. He was as muscled and firm as Lassiter had imagined, yet he hadn't expected his skin would be so soft. The combination was intoxicating. He smelled faintly of a musky cologne and he could have sworn his hair had a hint of pineapple scent.

Shawn sank one hand into Lassiter's hair, holding him in the kiss and planted another hand on his ass, grinding his cock up against him.

"You still have wa—y too many clothes on," Shawn said, tugging playfully at Lassiter's boxers. Lassiter stood, and removed the underwear, feeling more vulnerable than he could remember having felt before. His brain began running down some checklist it had decided upon without his conscious reflection.

Yep. Naked with Spencer. Raging hard on. Not freaking out. Not interested in stopping. That answers that, then.

Shawn's hair was in disarray, his eyes shone with anticipation and lust, and his erection lay firm against his stomach. Lassiter knelt on the bed, and moved up until their eyes were at a level. He began to kiss Shawn's neck, then kissed across his collarbone and down his chest, grazing and teasing the nipples with his tongue, drawing a gasp from Shawn's lips. Lassiter slowly worked his way down, planting kisses along the taught stomach muscles next to where Shawn's erect penis leaked and twitched in desperate anticipation. He paused, then grasped Shawn's erection in his hand, squeezing it firmly. Shawn groaned and pushed his hips forward.

Well, this is it, Lassiter thought. Last chance to back out. But I'm not backing out, am I? Okay then. Relax. Just like shooting a gun for the first time. Doing it isn't as intimidating as thinking about doing it.

He leaned in and wrapped his lips around Shawn's cock, enveloping it in his mouth. Slowly he slid down, bringing his lips to meet his fist. This drew a gasp from Shawn, who arched up off the bed before falling back again. Using his fist in tandem with his mouth, Lassiter began to glide up and down the shaft, pausing to wipe his tongue over the underside of the head. He used his hand to control the depth and prevent himself from gagging. Lassiter prided himself on giving his best effort to every endeavour, and this was no exception. He wanted to be good.

If we're going to do this properly, he said to himself, *analyze it all later. Just be in the moment right now*. He gave himself up to the feeling, thinking only about the musky scent of Shawn's pubic hair and the feel and taste of Shawn in his mouth.

Shawn began breathing in ragged panting breaths and tossed his head from side to side as if trying to escape from the sensations. As his breathing increased and his moans got louder Lassiter knew Shawn was close. He tightened his grip and quickened his pace.

"Oh my fucking God, Lassie!" Shawn groaned between clenched teeth as his orgasm overcame him. He thrust forward and his grip tightened in Lassiter's hair, as if to prevent him from escaping. But Lassiter had no intention of going anywhere. He clamped his mouth around Shawn's cock and swallowed in quick gulps, then remained motionless until Shawn pulled back of his own accord.

"That was...just...amazing!" Shawn said between gasps.

"Thanks," Lassiter said, sitting up and stretching his neck back to remove the tension. "Excuse me a moment," he stood up. "I'm going to grab a drink."

"Okay, but I warn you, if you're thinking of bolting out the window, your room is on the 18th floor."

Lassiter returned from the bathroom sipping from a glass of water. He offered the glass to Shawn, who accepted it eagerly, parched from the heavy breathing.

Shawn grabbed Lassiter's wrist. "Now can I please return the favour?" he pulled Lassiter onto the bed and pinned him to the comforter.

"Only if you really want to," he mumbled uncertainly.

"Oh I want to, Lassie." Shawn buried his face in Lassiter's neck. He gasped as Shawn began to suck and bite. Lassiter knew this was going to leave a seriously dark hickey, but it was so arousing that he felt powerless to protest. He groaned again as he felt Shawn's hand wrap around his hardened cock and begin to slowly pump it. Shawn came up for air and began to kiss, nibble and suck his way across Lassiter's chest, teasing his nipples into erect points and then pulling on them gently with his teeth. Finally he shifted down to his waist and looked up at Lassiter with an eager and lascivious smile.

None of Lassiter's fantasies (if he were to admit to having had any fantasies like this) had prepared him for how it felt to know that Shawn Spencer was about to give him head. Lassiter was used to being the pursuer. In the back of his mind, sex had always seemed like something women did as a favour for him. Having a partner express this level of interest was a new experience.

Well, Lassiter thought, if there's one thing Spencer does well, it's show enthusiasm.

And, he added a few seconds later, also give blowjobs.

Spencer's mouth was hot and slick and his pointed little tongue was extremely active. Lassiter closed his eyes and grasped the blankets, trying to hold off on the orgasm that was quickly building in his balls. He was sweating now and gasping for air as Shawn was taking him smoothly into the back of his throat.

How often does he do this? Lassiter wondered briefly before he felt himself pass the point of logical thought. Just then Shawn moaned, and the heavy vibrations pushed Lassiter over the edge. "Shawn," he managed to growl roughly as he lost all control and arched forward, burying his cock in Shawn's throat as he came. When his mind cleared again he lay still, enjoying the pleasurable glow that had spread throughout his body, sapping him of energy.

Best head of my life, he thought wistfully. *What the hell am I going to do now?*

Lassiter and Shawn lay together in the glow of the television, watching Danno and McGarrett taking down arms smugglers on an episode of Hawaii Five-O.

"Danno and McGarrett are totally a couple," Shawn said.

"What are you basing that on?" Lassiter asked.

"He looks at Danno longer than he looks at Kono or Chin Ho." Shawn nestled into the crook of Lassiter's arm, and began playing with the hair on the detective's chest. "You know, the way I look at you more than I look at McNab or O'Hara."

Lassiter was slightly alarmed by the feelings he was having. Part of him had hoped that once the sex had happened the power of this obsession would end and he would return to normal. At least to what was normal for him to feel around Spencer. But this wasn't an 'out of your system' feeling. This was more aptly described as affection. He wasn't even going to think about the other words he might use here. *Of course you feel this way,* he chided himself. *Your brain is swimming in oxytocin and vasopressin. They simulate emotional attachment after sex. They will wear off. By tomorrow you'll be back to slamming him into walls erection-free.* Of course that didn't mean there was anything wrong with enjoying the sensations of the moment. It had been a long time since he'd enjoyed post-sex cuddling and even longer since he'd fallen asleep with someone in his arms. Lucinda hadn't liked to stay over. She said the chance they would be caught outweighed the benefits. Lassiter hadn't agreed; he liked the benefits.

Chapter 7

The next morning Lassiter barricaded himself in the bathroom and spent five minutes using his electric toothbrush and thinking. He felt completely unsure about how he was supposed to interact with Spencer now. *Sure, the sex had been great, but it wasn't like this was the start of anything. Spencer's life didn't seem to include relationships.* In the three years he'd known him he didn't think he'd seen him with the same girl twice. And he was pretty sure Spencer didn't have a regular boyfriend. *Unless he and Guster were....No. Guster was definitely not into Shawn that way. Right?*

Lassiter came out of the bathroom and began to gather up his clothes. Shawn was sitting naked on the bed, the comforter pulled discretely around his midsection, his clothes hanging over one arm.

"So....," Shawn said. "I'm going to take a shower, and dress. Will you still be here when I come out?"

Lassiter looked at him, surprised. "You think I'd just take off without you?" *What kind of guys was Shawn used to picking up?* he wondered.

"The thought did occur to me."

"I'm not going to ditch you. Take your time." Besides, Lassiter had learned early on in their acquaintance that Shawn having unsupervised access to a hotel room secured with his credit card resulted in an expensive room service and mini-fridge bill.

Shawn went into the bathroom and started to run the water in the shower.

"So I figure we'll get brunch and then drive back to Santa Barbara," Lassiter said loudly toward the bathroom.

"Sounds good," Shawn shouted back. "Let's take the PCH though, it's prettier."

Lassiter considered pointing out that would add three hours or more to the trip, but changed his mind. The scenic route would mean more vista gazing and less talking. He wasn't very good at post-coital chit-chat, and this situation was even further outside his comfort zone.

Ten minutes later, their belongings packed, Lassiter led the way downstairs and paid the bill. Marie was behind the counter.

"Good Morning Mr. Lassiter," She smiled at Carlton, "And you too Mr. Cassidy."

"Thanks, Marie." Shawn said, leaving Lassiter looking confused.

"Did you win the train contest?" She asked as she processed Lassiter's credit card.

“We sure did,” Shawn said. “It was just trains and tunnels all evening.” Lassiter took his card back from the blushing clerk and pushed Shawn out to the car.

“Don’t you ever stop?”

During the first six hours of the drive Shawn kept himself entertained with searching for radio stations and talking about movies and television shows. Lassiter joined in occasionally, grateful that he wasn’t discussing anything about the previous evening. Of course that didn’t stop him from keeping a running discussion with himself.

You’ve got to talk to him about last night at some point.

Can’t we just carry on and pretend nothing happened?

Great, and we’ll just have whether or not he intends to out us to the entire SBPD be a surprise then, shall we?

Shawn wouldn’t do that.

Are we talking about the same person? He’s been undercutting you at work since you met him.

I think I can trust him. I want to trust him.

Don’t start thinking this is more than it is just because he’s had your cock in his mouth. For all you know that’s just a regular Thursday night for him.

Lassiter was so caught up in his internal argument he barely noticed the passing trees, cliffs and breaking surf until they were an hour outside of Santa Barbara.

They ate dinner at Theresa's Tamale Shack, one of Lassiter’s favourite on-the-road pit stops. Finally, as he got back into the car he addressed the issue that had been burning a hole in his gut for the past two hundred and fifty miles.

“Listen Spencer, I accept that you’re going to tell Guster about last night. But please, in the name of Smith and Wesson, do not tell O’Hara or Vick or anyone else at the station.”

Shawn looked at Lassiter quizzically. “You think I’d out you at work?”

“Maybe not maliciously,” Lassiter allowed. “But your behaviour might lead people to put two and two together.”

“Relax, Lassie, I’m not going to come into the station and start dry-humping your leg.”

“Actually, Spencer, that’s a pretty accurate description of the way you normally behave

around the station.”

“I won’t say a word about San Francisco. Beyond what I’ve already written in my blog this morning while you were brushing your teeth.”

“Please be joking.” Lassiter closed his eyes and took a slow deep breath in and out.

“Of course I’m joking. Frankly, I’m amazed that you even know what a blog is.”

“I’m not living in the middle ages.”

“No. But you’d look great at Medieval Times. We should go. Can you swordfight?”

Lassiter pulled out of the parking lot. *No wonder Spencer didn't have any relationships. How did anyone ever know when he was serious?*

An hour later he pulled up in front of Shawn’s apartment and turned the ignition off. Shawn unlatched his seatbelt and turned to face him.

“Well, I don’t really know what I’m supposed to say now.” Lassiter sat there holding the steering wheel, looking down.

“Thank-you for a lovely evening?” Shawn suggested.

“In any event, it was an interesting experiment.” Lassiter was trying hard to keep his face from betraying the mixed emotions flooding through him.

“I see. Who exactly is the control group in this experiment?” Shawn cocked his head at Lassiter. “Will anyone be getting the placebo sex?”

“Okay, maybe experiment wasn’t the right word,” he admitted.

Shawn moved out of his seat and onto Lassiter’s lap. Gripping the headrest, he began to trail kisses down the detective’s neck.

“Stay over,” he whispered. “You’ve got a suitcase packed with what, three days worth of clothes?”

“I live less than 15 minutes away,” Lassiter pointed out.

“But my place has oral sex and Chief Vick said that you weren’t due back until Monday.”

“That’s true.” *What would it hurt, Lassiter wondered, if the experiment were extended just one more day?* He unlocked his seatbelt and looked at Shawn, who sat grinning on top of him. “Get off my lap, Spencer.”

Late the next afternoon Shawn was returning from the market with a bag of groceries when his cell phone rang. The sounds of Michael Jackson's Thriller ringtone told him it was Gus.

"So how did your stalking go?" Gus asked. "Did Lassiter catch you and send you home in shame?"

"I think he may have caught a glimpse of me when I was blowing him in his hotel room. And he may have spotted me doing it again last night at my place." Shawn let himself into his apartment and began to unpack the groceries.

There was a long pause on the other end. Then Gus said, "I'm not hearing this, Shawn."

"Don't be a ticket-writing meter maid. I want to talk about my dirty weekend."

"No. Absolutely no."

"Lost Weekend? Weekend at Bernie's? Well, dirty Thursday-Friday. It may end up spanning into the weekend. I'll keep you posted." He pulled a pot and a bowl from the cupboard and put them on the counter.

"Even assuming that I did want to hear about your sex life—which I don't—why would I want to hear about Lassiter's? The man scares me. He has a gun and he's not afraid to use it."

"Your lips say 'no,' but your remarks about his gun cry out for sexual innuendo."

"I'm saying goodbye now, Shawn. Call me when you're free."

"Wait! I need your advice." Shawn tucked his cell against his ear with his shoulder, took the vegetables to the sink and began to wash them.

"My advice is to never mention this to anyone else. How's that for a start? I'm pretty sure Lassiter would kill you if it gets back to the station."

"I couldn't agree with you more. Which is why I'm keeping it super-secret. I'm only telling you. Possibly Henry, just to make him squirm."

"You definitely shouldn't tell your dad. Hell, you shouldn't even have told me."

"I need you. I need your relationship know-how. Be my Dr. Phil. Be my Oprah."

"Relationship? Is that what you're calling this?"

“Maybe. Technically, today could count as a third date. That’s practically a silver anniversary for me.” Shawn left the clean vegetables on a tea towel to dry.

There was a long pause.

“It is true, I do have a lot of wisdom to impart. You really don’t know anything about relationships.”

“I dated Rebecca Solomon for a whole year.”

“She was your lab partner. Those weren’t dates, they were chemistry assignments.”

“Oh, there was chemistry. At least on my part.”

“A real date involves at least two people, each of whom are aware they’re on a date, Shawn.”

“Then I have a date with Lassiter tonight. He’s coming over for dinner.” Shawn emptied a bag of arugula into a bowl and began tearing up leaf lettuce.

“Really? And he knows it’s a date-date?”

“Yep. And I hope he’s a hungry hungry hippo, because I’m making an enormous amount of pasta with basil and oregano. And garlic bread. And some kind of salad to start.” Shawn looked down at the green leafy pieces in the bowl.

“That’s a great idea,” Gus said. “What’s for dessert, an EpiPen and a visit to emergency?”

“I’m not sure where you’re going with this, Gus.”

“Lassiter’s allergic to mint. Basil and oregano are both in the mint family.”

“He didn’t say he was allergic to basil or oregano. Besides, what’s the worst-case scenario? Sneezing, watery eyes?”

“Uh-uh. Try itching, hives, headaches, nose bleeds, vomiting, or his throat closes up and he can’t breathe.”

“Good to know. That would put a bit of a dampener on my after dinner plans. See, this is why I need your advice.”

“I’m hanging up now Shawn.”

Chapter 8

“Can’t talk, Shawn. It’s poker tonight.” Henry was carrying a bag of snacks and beer out to the truck. “So whatever little case you’re stuck on will just have to wait until tomorrow. Maybe if you called first, this wouldn’t happen.”

“Okay, sure. You’re right. I just wanted to give you the heads up. Lassiter and I are sleeping together. It’s nothing too serious, although I have been looking up Canadian wedding packages.”

Henry climbed into the cab and gave a long-suffering sigh. “I don’t have time for this, Shawn.”

“I know, you’re freaked out by the whole hot man-love thing. It’s understandable for your generation to be a little uncomfortable.”

“If this is about you making me feel uncomfortable about your interest in men, you’re a decade and a half too late.”

“A decade and a half? Are you thinking about that Frankie Says Relax shirt? Cause those were all the rage. I was surfing the crest of fashion on that one.”

“You had a Val Kilmer poster on your wall through all of junior high, Shawn. No completely straight guy likes Val Kilmer that much.”

“Okay Dad, maybe the Real Genius pinup should have been a hint. But do I at least get points for picking someone you can relate to? You like Lassie, right?”

“Is this about me, Shawn?”

“Why would this be about you?”

“Oh, I don’t know. He’s an older man. He’s a cop. It’s not a stretch to see daddy substitute written all over this.”

“Gross. No way. Carlton is not a substitute you. Just...gross.”

“Or maybe you thought that sleeping with him would piss me off more. I don’t care. You’re a grown-up. You don’t need my approval, as you keep telling me,” Henry said. “But I will say that I thought I raised you to have more respect for the department.”

“What’s my respect for the department got to do with this?”

“Do you think about anybody but yourself Shawn? There are dozens of gay men in Santa Barbara that you could hook up with. Guys whose life won’t be ruined when you lose interest and move on.”

“Why do you always assume that I have the attention span of a goldfish?”

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe because you’ve had 57 jobs since you left high school? It doesn’t exactly say stable long-term commitment.”

“I’ve been running Psych for three years.”

“You do realize that your little fling could cost Lassiter his job, right?”

“Really? Cause the guys at the station like Lassie and they looove me. I think they’d be happy.”

“Yeah, well, if you like Lassiter at all you’ll stop this ridiculous charade and leave him the hell alone.” Henry started the truck and turned his head to pull out of the drive.

Shawn stepped back from the truck. “But this could be something,” he said, almost inaudible over the motor.

Henry heard him anyway. “Being an adult is about making sacrifices, Kid. Welcome to the real world.”

“So what, I’m supposed to lie about how I feel?” Shawn shouted after him. Henry paused and leaned his head out of the truck window.

“You’ve been lying to him since day one. So don’t play all injured innocence with me. I know you too well.” He drove off, leaving Shawn feeling disappointed, but not in Henry.

Lassiter looked up to see O’Hara looming over his desk.

“Can I help you?” he asked, barely looking up from the stack of paperwork.

“Did you and Shawn have a fight?” she asked.

Lassiter groaned inwardly. He didn’t want to have personal discussions at work (or anywhere, really) and talking about Spencer was now a personal discussion even if O’Hara didn’t know it.

“What makes you ask that?” he asked, trying to keep his voice from betraying any emotion.

“He’s kind of avoiding you, don’t you think? Normally he’s touchy-feely with you and teases you and when he comes in now he’s just ignoring you.”

Damn. Despite her strange exuberance, O'Hara was a detective. How long could he hope to keep anything from her?

“Well, I did smack him into the wall and tell him to leave me alone,” Lassiter said. “So this change in behaviour is probably him leaving me alone. Like I asked.”

But was it? They'd had four days of intense sex, and some non-sex time that actually felt like dates. But since he'd returned to work Spencer had been avoiding him. No calls, no flirting, no inappropriately touchy visions. It was exactly what he'd asked for, but it wasn't what he wanted anymore. Also, it was suddenly extremely suspicious.

Be realistic here, he told himself harshly. He hasn't had a job for longer than six months. How much shorter do you think his longest relationship has been?

He and Guster have been friends since grade school.

Yeah, but friendships and relationships are two different things. And you and Spencer have never been friends.

This is the same thing you always do. You over-analyse everything. You never take a chance and just go with your emotions. What kind of a cop can't trust his gut?

That's a good question.

Lassiter suddenly realized he'd been standing in front of his desk staring into space for some time. Detective Miles and Officer McNab were looking at him curiously.

“What are you looking at?” he growled. “Don't you have any work to do?”

The next time Shawn entered the station Lassiter pulled him over to the secluded corner where they'd had their altercation the previous week. He pushed him against the wall and leaned in toward his ear.

“Are you blowing me off?” Lassiter asked.

“Given how we spent last week, I can't believe you chose that phrase.”

“You know what I mean. I asked you to be discreet, but I didn't ask for you to treat me like I'm invisible. O'Hara is getting suspicious.”

“You told me to leave you alone. I remember it pretty clearly. Smack me into the wall again, maybe you'll remember it too.”

“Ignore what I said before. Just act normal.”

“I can’t do normal.”

“Well normal for you. Listen, can we meet somewhere and talk? I’d like to get some things straightened out—,” Shawn raised an eyebrow at Lassiter’s choice of words “—you know what I mean—about us.”

“There’s no ‘us’ Lassie.”

Lassiter’s stomach sank at the words. “Well, whatever you want to call what’s going on. If we’re going to be seeing each other outside of work then we should—”

“I don’t think we should see each other that way anymore,” Shawn cut in. “You don’t need that.”

Great. He was getting dumped after less than four dates, even going by the most lax definition of the term ‘date’. *I knew it. I’ve been a total sucker to think this was going to be anything other than one long joke on Spencer’s part. But I’ll be damned if I let him pretend he’s doing this for my benefit.*

“Excuse me?” Lassiter’s voice took on an edge he usually reserved for interrogation. “What the hell do you know about what I need?”

“You don’t need me. I’m pretty sure on that one. You need this.” Shawn gestured in general around the police station. “You and I are done.”

“Fine. Fine.” He raised his hands slightly, surrendering to Shawn’s decision. “I knew this wasn’t going anywhere. I mean, I should have known.” And then muttering more to himself than to Spencer, “Nothing I like ever does.” He stepped back a step and pinched the bridge of his nose. He could feel a headache coming on.

“I’m doing this for you.” Shawn had reached out and touched Lassiter’s chest. His heart rate was skyrocketing.

Lassiter glanced about to ensure they were still alone. “I’m not your fucking girlfriend, Shawn. You don’t have to be chivalrous here.”

“I care about you Lassie—with feelings and everything. I want you to be happy.”

“Really?” Lassiter hesitated to believe this. If it was true, then maybe this was something. *Of course that opens a whole new can of worms.*

“Absolutely.”

“Well then how about treating me like a grown-up and letting me make my own decisions?”

“The decision’s been made, Lassie.” Shawn said. “You made it a long time ago, and I’m going to respect that.”

“That’s bullshit. Other people go on dates after work, why am I the exception? Why do I have to pick between work and having a life?”

“Because with the kind of work you do, you might have to.”

“I won’t pretend the job isn’t dangerous, certainly not to you. But you also know that most of the time it’s just routine. Hell, sometimes it’s even boring.”

“Sure.” Shawn laughed. “It’s routine and boring right up until someone shoots you in the head.”

“Which is why it makes even more sense that I do what makes me happy before that day shows up.” Lassiter sighed. He wasn’t getting through. *Maybe it is all a bluff and Spencer’s just bored and looking for an easy way out.* “If you’re dumping me fine, just be honest. All I want is for you to tell me the truth.”

Shawn looked up at him and chewed on his lower lip. His eyes were green today.

“The whole truth and nothing but the truth? Okay.” Shawn nodded as if he’d come to a decision. “Can we meet up after work?”

Chapter 9

Shawn had invited Lassiter out to Crab Shack Willy's for 6:00 p.m.

It's a public place so I won't make a scene. Yep, he's dumping me. I knew it. And I even changed my shirt and wore a new tie.

"I like the new tie," Shawn said. He was wearing the same lime green t-shirt and grey jeans he'd worn earlier.

"Thanks."

"So. I invited you here because we need to talk," Shawn said once the waitress had taken their order.

"Okay." Lassiter eyed the basket of cheese rolls on the table. If he was getting dumped he should load up on rolls now, because he wasn't going to be staying for the surf and turf he'd ordered.

"There are some things I need to tell you, and I hope you won't freak out."

"Just get it over with, Spencer." Lassiter was a 'pulling the bandage off quickly' kind of man. He grabbed a cheese roll and took a large bite.

"Oh. We're back to Spencer. Should I call you Detective Lassiter?"

"It's Head Detective," he mumbled around the cheese roll.

"And out of respect for you, I'll let that go right by with no dirty repartee."

Lassiter swallowed. "Get to the point, Shawn."

"You've always said that my being psychic was a crock. I appreciate that you've continued to be honest about that even when we've been sleeping with each other."

"My opinion hasn't changed."

"Well I brought you here to tell you that you're right."

"I'm right?" Lassiter looked puzzled. This wasn't where he'd expected the evening to go at all. He set the roll down on his bread plate.

"Yep. I'm not psychic."

"You're not?" *This has to be some kind of a trick, he thought. There's no way Shawn Spencer is just coming clean to me over cheese rolls in a crab shack.*

“Come on, you never thought I was.” Shawn smiled at Lassiter with an air of conspiracy, as if Lassiter had been in on the deception since the start.

“Then what are you?” *Maybe this was another Spencer put-on. He’d say he was a spiritual medium, or a telepath or a Betazoid.*

“You’re a detective. Detect.” Shawn had that smug look Lassiter remembered from his criminology professors. *I know the answer, the look said. Let’s see if you do.*

“Maybe I’m not a very good detective,” he said, “I thought you were bringing me here to dump me.”

“And you came anyway?”

“Of course I did.”

“Aw, that’s sweet. Are you cool if we don’t break up? Or did you already have another date lined up for 8:00? Is she meeting you here or are you picking her up?”

“There’s no other date. I did buy a bottle of J&B. I thought I’d go home and drink and listen to Vic Damone.”

“Add in some sex and we can do it together. But back to my not being psychic.”

“First I thought you were getting inside information. But surveillance reports showed that you weren’t meeting with anyone connected with the department. Also, some of your mail may have gotten...misdirected. But it all turned up clean. Whatever you do, it’s all upstairs.” Lassiter tapped his temple.

“And what do you think is going on upstairs?”

Lassiter shrugged his shoulders and shook his head, perplexed. *Really, Lassiter thought, If I’d figured it out don’t you think I’d have called you on it before now?*

“I don’t know. You’re some kind of idiot savant?”

“We don’t call people that anymore, Carlton. The proper terminology is Rainmen.”

“Whatever. You’re just figuring it all out before everyone else.”

“Exactly.”

“But how?”

“Allow me to demonstrate.” Shawn took a deep breath. “The man sitting by the bar when

we came in is named Roger Miller—not to be confused with the songwriter—this one works in Social Services. I know this because I saw him signing his credit card slip and spotted the union card in his wallet. He had the crabcakes and four beers, and paid with American Express. He's been stood up. I surmise he was waiting for a date because he's not comfortable in his dress shirt and his tie is choking him, so he doesn't wear them all the time like you do. Also, he's got cologne on and he got his hair cut today. I guess he's been stood up because he ordered an appetizer, but no dinner. He was expecting to be eating with someone. He's not going for dinner elsewhere, because who drinks four beer before dinner? He's been waiting and drinking. He's wearing a wedding ring, but it's loose on his hand, so he's lost some weight. Married men usually drop a few pounds when their wives leave and they have to do their own cooking. Or he might be trying to lose weight for the dating market. Either way—recently separated. I'm guessing he was supposed to meet his ex here, because he'd have removed the ring if he was meeting someone new. She's not coming. That's just a guess, but I don't think I'm going out on a limb with that one.”

“That's amazing.” Lassiter broke into a smile. “You got all that in what, the four seconds it took us to walk past his table on the way in?”

“Two seconds. I also noticed the situation between the two lesbians in the window seat. They're going to have a baby. The birth-mom-to-be is excited. The other mom is feeling a little anxious. I think she was hoping to make partner in her law firm first.”

“Of course! This all makes sense. Your mother doesn't use a tape recorder. You've inherited some kind of memory gene.”

“Yep. I remember everything. Also, Henry's been putting me through police academy bootcamp since I was seven, so I notice everything.”

“Bootcamp?”

“Ask me how many hats there are in the room. Come on, it'll be fun.”

“You would have been an amazing cop. Why didn't you—”

“I would have been a lousy cop. I'm easily distracted and bored. I don't like being told what to do. Also, if my heart rate goes below 100 BPM I explode, killing everyone on board. So I can't be stuck in some boring stakeout or chained to a desk doing paperwork.”

“And you have a felony record for that car theft, so you can't be a cop.”

“I can't even be a regular private investigator. It's psychic detective or nothing.”

“Why are you telling me all this?”

“Because we’re dating. You’re my boyfriend—at least that’s what I call you when I talk to Gus and Henry about it.”

“You told Henry?”

“Relax. He can keep a secret. He’s the reason I’m telling you. He made me feel bad for lying about it.” Shawn looked up at Lassiter, his smile doing nothing to hide how anxious he was feeling. “So...are you going to bust me, ruin my business and destroy Gus’ dream of being Axel Foley on his days off?”

“No. I’m not.”

“Great. Will you pretend to have a change of heart and believe I’m psychic in front of the rest of the department?”

“Absolutely not.”

“Didn’t think so, but it never hurts to ask.”