

Carlton's Worst Inhibitions

By tera_gram

Rating: NC-17 for M/M oral, anal. Mild bdsm overtones.

Pairings: Lassiter/Shawn

Warning: Shassie Slash. Takes place after Lassie Did A Bad Bad Thing. Contains spoilers for that episode and also for Shawn and Gus of The Dead. Also contains spoilers for Season 2 of The Shield. Sequel to Lassiter Learns How to Bend. Contains homophobic slurs.

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Summary: With their one-night-stand stretching into its second month, Lassiter tries to juggle his anxieties about Shawn's sexual history, coming out at work, and his own identity. Anonymous photos of Shawn and Lassiter begin arriving in the mail. Who is stalking them and what connection, if any, do they have to the upcoming Drimmer trial?

"What is this?" Hara sat at her desk looking at the contents of an envelope.

"What's what?" Lassiter asked absently. His arrest reports weren't going to write themselves.

"These just came in the mail. They're pictures of you and Shawn."

Lassiter dropped the reports and grabbed the photos. They were surveillance shots of him and Shawn at a gay coffee shop in Ventura.

I knew that trip was a bad idea, he thought.

Coffee was coffee to Lassiter. Driving for half an hour to drink it in a gay café didn't make him feel any different. Shawn, on the other hand seemed to enjoy dragging him to such places and talking about things like whether Carlton fit the definition of an otter. In Lassiter's opinion some manly chest hair did not make him a marine mammal. Luckily, even in a gay venue in another city Lassiter wasn't comfortable with public displays of affection. The photos were odd, but not incriminating. The photographer hadn't even got the café's big rainbow flag in the shot.

Oh hell, he thought, was this Spencer's way of prodding him to come out at work?

O'Hara looked at the envelope. It was addressed to the Police Department and postmarked in Santa Barbara the day before.

"That's weird. Why are we getting photos of you and Shawn?"

As if it had been timed, Shawn walked into the station carrying a cup of coffee and a box of croissants. He was wearing a lime green shirt and tight black jeans.

He's been home to change, Lassiter noted. Shawn had been staying over several nights a week lately, leaving when Lassiter went to work. He was considering asking him if he wanted to leave some clothes at his place. Maybe giving him a bureau drawer. It wasn't like moving in together; it was purely practical. Of course if Shawn had pulled this little stunt with the photos, maybe the offer was premature.

"Photos of me?" Shawn asked. "Am I holding a tub of ice cream? Because I was in a short-lived Ben & Jerry's campaign." Shawn set the box of croissants on O'Hara's desk. "Delicious flaky pastry? Anyone?"

Lassiter handed him the photos and glared at him, looking for any sign that he'd been anticipating their arrival. Shawn looked at them briefly and then passed them back. "Oh, these. Lassie's helping me out on a case. It's payback for our helping him on the Drimmer thing." He sipped his coffee as if nothing out of the ordinary had really happened. His face betrayed no indication of surprise or concern.

Either he sent them himself, Lassiter thought, *or he's the best liar I've ever met.*

"Oh. That's nice." O'Hara smiled at Lassiter. "I was worried your only thank-you was going to be those ridiculous coupons."

"Nobody could be that cheap," Shawn said, catching Lassiter's eye and grinning.

"So what's the case?" O'Hara asked as she pulled a chocolate croissant from the box.

"Infidelity."

"Petnapping." Shawn and Lassiter spoke at the same time.

"A cheating spouse has taken the client's pet," Shawn said smoothly. "And these photos are evidence." He pointed to a small white dog visible in the corner of the picture.

"Why did you have them sent here?" she asked.

Her tone was innocent enough, Lassiter thought. *She wasn't suspicious, only curious.*

"They're for Lassiter. I need him to borrow an identical dog for when we go undercover at the pet psychiatrist."

As soon as O'Hara was occupied Lassiter pulled Shawn into the file room and slapped the photos on the table.

"Is this your idea of respecting my timeline, Shawn? Cause it doesn't feel like it." It had been a month and a half since the San Francisco trip. Their arrangement was business as usual during working hours, and what Shawn insisted on calling "risky business" after work. Lassiter knew Shawn would rather be upfront about them at the station but he'd promised to defer to Lassiter's comfort level. Thus far he was nowhere near comfortable.

"You think I did this?" Shawn looked at Lassiter with shock. "How? I'm in the pictures."

"You talked Guster into taking them." Lassiter wasn't so sure of himself now. If these pictures were an attempt to provoke him to come out, why had Shawn covered for them with O'Hara?

"Strike two, Lassie. How about the old benefit of the doubt? Innocent until proven guilty? Remember that old chestnut?"

"If you didn't take them, then who did?" Lassiter shifted gears. Looking for a suspect together was something he was much more familiar with. He preferred it when he and Shawn were on the same side.

"Good question. If I remember correctly, it's between a blue Sunfire and a grey Ford Explorer. They were both parked across the street at the approximate angle to have taken these."

"You remember the cars that were parked across the street?"

"Do you not recall our little talk at Crab Shack Willy's?" Shawn asked. "I thought we went over this. Maybe I dreamed it. No...I was wearing pants, so I'm pretty sure I was awake."

"I remember. But that Ventura trip was a week ago."

"Would it make you feel better if I pretend I'm having a psychic flashback?" Shawn put a hand to his head dramatically, grabbed Lassiter's shoulder and trembled. "I see two cars..."

"It's still useless without something more to go on. There must be thousands of Sunfires and Explorers in Santa Barbara. It's not even worth doing a printout of registered owners."

"I'm not sure we want evidence to start accumulating in this case, Lassie. Who knows what the next batch might show."

Chapter 2

That evening Lassiter answered a knock at his door. Shawn stood on the stoop holding a takeout bag from Kingston's and a DVD box set.

"Hey Lassie. I come bearing jerk chicken and Dragnet."

Lassiter let Shawn inside and then peered into the street looking for either of their suspect vehicles. The street was clear. *Of course the culprit could have switched cars. In fact, if I were him that's exactly what I'd do.*

When he came back inside Shawn was sitting on the sofa and unpacking the food. He smiled at Lassiter and jerked his head toward the windows.

"I suggest we draw the blinds unless you want to get a photo delivery tomorrow with you, me and Sergeant Joe Friday in a compromising position."

"Already on it," Lassiter said. He pulled the curtains for good measure then joined Shawn on the sofa.

When their one-night-stand had first stretched into a long weekend Lassiter told himself he was doing it for the sex. It had been almost three years since he'd had sex regularly. Then their long weekend had turned into a week, then a month. *We are not dating*, he thought, *we're just letting off some long pent-up sexual tension.* It was only logical to have dinner together beforehand. They had to eat sometime. And they both enjoyed classic police drama, so why not watch Law and Order, NYPD Blue, and Streets of San Francisco? It would be rude to just kick Spencer out after sex. Maybe there were some men who could do that, but Lassiter wasn't one of them. So it made sense for Shawn to sleep over. It hadn't taken too many evenings of cuddling in front of the television and falling asleep next to him before Lassiter acknowledged that he had been kidding himself. He was dating a man.

Now, as they sat together on the sofa and watched Sergeant Friday and Officer Frank Smith collecting the facts, Lassiter reflected how unexpectedly happy his off-duty time had become since he started spending it with Shawn. Of course his recent dating experiences hadn't raised the bar very high. He'd arrested one date for prescription drug fraud, another had gone to the restaurant bathroom and never returned, and a third had turned out to be a hooker. Since seeing Shawn, he'd actually started looking forward to going home, which was an unusual experience. He was definitely having feelings for him that originated above the waistline. And with that realization came the anxiety he always felt, that he would lose the people he cared about. He'd tried to convince himself this fear was irrational, but his relationship history suggested otherwise.

The latest mental torment he'd come up with was the possibility that Shawn was simply hot for cops. It wasn't completely far fetched. *Hell*, he admitted, *even I think the gun is hot.*

"So level with me, Shawn," he said. "Do you find any of these television cops attractive? Friday, McGarrett, Keller?"

"Nope. I only have eyes for you, Lassypants. Well, you and Val Kilmer, and he's not returning my phone calls. Although I have been getting letters from his lawyer. How far away is 150 yards?"

"I meant this seriously, Shawn. Are you sure this isn't just about the badge and the gun for you?"

"I don't have a cop fetish, if that's what you're getting at. Although if this is your roundabout way of asking if I'd like to do some roleplaying, the answer is yes. Or should I say, yes, Officer?" He looked at Lassiter and raised an eyebrow. When Lassiter didn't respond he continued.

"Seriously, Lassie, I'd like you even if you decided to quit the force and raise meercats." Lassiter wasn't sure he knew what a meercat was, but like so many things Shawn said, it wasn't really relevant to the issue at hand.

"I'm not saying I'd have a problem with it if you did," he said, "I'd just like to know. Have you dated a cop before?"

"Well, I dated O'Hara and McNab and Dobson and Martinez, and Drimmer and I lived together last summer...." Lassiter's stomach knotted, then gradually uncoiled as he realized Shawn was joking.

"Don't mess around here Spencer."

"Less than ten percent of cops are women, Lassie. Many of those women bear a closer resemblance to Malden's Lieutenant Stone than they do to our Detective O'Hara. So that's a negative."

"What about male cops?" Lassiter persisted.

"Sure, I've liked the occasional Y chromosome in blue, but it always ended in rejection and tears. At least I'm pretty sure it would have if I'd said anything to them about it."

"So the men you've dated have all been civilians."

"Surprisingly, I've been too busy fighting crime to explore the limpness of my wrists before now. Well, fighting crime and learning to bungee jump. You think it's just falling with an elastic cord attached, but there's much more to it."

"Fine Shawn. Forget I asked." *I should have known we couldn't just have this discussion like normal people.*

"I was stuck in an elevator with one of the guys from N-Sync, but I doubt that counts as a homosexual experience. Besides, I don't think it was the gay one."

"The gay one was Lance Bass." Even Lassiter knew this. He'd seen it on the cover of People in the checkout line.

"Wasn't he the cyclist that had cancer?"

"You're thinking of Lance Armstrong."

"No, I'm pretty sure he's an astronaut."

"That's Neil Armstrong."

"An astronaut and a musician too? I love his rendition of Cracklin' Rosie."

Lassiter leaned forward and shut Shawn up the only way he'd found effective.

A few minutes later Shawn and Lassiter were in the hall en route to Lassiter's bedroom. His tie was askew and his shirt was unbuttoned. Shawn was topless and his hair was finger raked into spiky abandon.

Shawn began to tease Lassiter's nipples with his tongue while gazing up at him mischievously. "How about stepping it up a notch tonight?" he asked.

"What did you have in mind?" Lassiter's voice was throaty and deep, carried along by the lust of the moment.

"I want you in me." Shawn's eyes met Lassiter's in an unwavering lock. They were hazel tonight.

Lassiter stepped back and took a few slow deep breaths. During their seven weeks of dating they'd been having plenty of sex. They'd been trading blowjobs and handjobs and engaged in some frottage so energetic it had given them both bruises. But that was as far as they'd gone. Shawn hadn't been pushy, but Lassiter knew it was only a matter of time before the issue came up. He'd steered clear of raising it himself, but now it was unavoidable.

"I'm not ready for that yet, Shawn," he said, all trace of arousal gone from his tone.

"Oh." Shawn tried to keep the disappointment out of his voice. "Are you sure? Cause I feel pretty ready." He stepped closer to Lassiter, who was slowly moving back toward the living room.

"That's good to know. I'm just not there yet. Are you okay with that?"

"Sure. Whatever. That's totally cool," he said with studied nonchalance. "But just so you know, you already have boy cooties, if that's what you're concerned about."

"There's just a lot to work out between us before I'm ready to take things to that level."

"What kind of things?" Shawn looked concerned.

"Could we not talk about it now?" He wished Shawn *was* psychic. Maybe then he'd know that if he hadn't initiated the discussion, he wasn't ready to have it yet.

"Sure. No problemo. Let me know when you're ready." Shawn had switched on his enthusiasm again, but Lassiter suspected it was just a façade. "We'll have a codeword. The code word is Oz."

"As in the movie musical or the television series?"

"Whichever you find hotter, Lassie." He motioned toward the bedroom. "Are we still going in there?"

"Do you still want to, now?"

"Hell yes. Although my ability to give great head may be diminished by the heartbreak of rejection."

Lassiter wasn't completely sure Shawn was kidding.

Henry was in the kitchen setting a steak into marinade when Shawn walked in.

"Okay, what's so important that I had to hurry over?" Shawn asked.

Things with Henry had been strained since Shawn and Carlton had started dating. Henry had made it clear that while he liked Carlton and loved Shawn, he resented being party to a secret he hadn't wanted to be in on. Also, he still felt convinced that Shawn's relationship was going to cut the legs off Carlton's career. Shawn wasn't entirely certain that Henry was wrong about that. Unfortunately, there was no way to tell until the cat was out of the bag, or the worms were opened, or whatever metaphor one wanted to go with.

"Hey there," Henry greeted him. "I got some interesting mail this morning. Thought you might like to see it."

"Is it Publisher's Clearing House? Are you already possibly a winner?"

"It's pictures. Of you and Carlton."

"Oh." *The evidence was accumulating.*

"Is this your childish way of taunting me, Shawn? Cause I don't care. Date whomever you want. Really. At least Carlton's a nice guy." Henry washed his hands and began to peel potatoes.

"Why does everyone think I'm sending these photos?" Shawn threw himself onto the sofa in exasperation. "They got one at the station, too."

"If it's not you then who is it?" Henry paused mid-peel.

"That's the fifty thousand dollar question."

"Actually, it's the sixty-four thousand dollar question."

"I've heard it both ways."

"No you haven't. Trust me, I saw the show."

"Interesting...." Shawn said as he picked up the envelope and looked at the photos Henry had received.

"What's so interesting?"

"These aren't the same photos that Jules got. Hers were of us at Judy's Café in Ventura last week. These were taken at Willy's Crab Shack seven weeks ago." *Seven weeks. How long had this psycho shutterbug been following them?* Shawn ran over all the things in his mind that he and Carlton had done in public that might look bad in a photograph. Luckily, Carlton had said no to his suggestion of hand jobs at the drive-in.

"Then they're additional evidence," Henry said, wiping his hands on a towel and coming to lean over Shawn's shoulder. "So what do these photos tell you?"

"The first set narrowed our paparazzi vehicle down to a Sunfire or an Explorer."

"Great. Did you see either of those type of vehicles at Willy's?"

"Just the Explorer."

"Bingo! There's your stalker."

"But we have no suspects and no more clues. Everyone and their dog owns an Explorer."

"Well then you'd better ask yourself who you've pissed off this much."

“So you’re saying it isn’t you?” Shawn looked at his father with mock seriousness. He hadn’t really thought it was Henry. He’d never do anything that might out Lassie at work.

“Very funny, Shawn. No, it isn’t me. I have a life. I don’t have time to be running all over town hoping that you and your boyfriend do something incriminating.”

“Good point.” Shawn threw the photos onto the coffee table. *The suspect would be someone with a lot of time on his hands. Unemployed or retired, maybe.* There weren’t any pictures of Shawn or Carlton alone. Whoever it was knew they were a couple, and didn’t mind revealing their secret to the SBPD.

“Listen, Shawn, there’s something I’ve been meaning to ask.”

“Is it which of the characters on *The Facts of Life* lost their virginity first? Because the answer is Natalie. Very progressive of them, letting the chunky girl get her groove on.”

“Can’t you be serious for one minute?”

“Sure.” Shawn removed all trace of smile from his face and furrowed his brow. “This is my serious face.”

“You and Carlton have been dating for what, a month and a half?”

“Forty-five days. Not that we’re counting.”

“Well I was wondering if you’d like to bring him over for dinner. I can grill up some steaks and we can get to know each other.”

“You already know him. You’ve been fishing together.”

“Get to know him as your boyfriend. That’s a whole different ballgame.”

“Maybe.” Shawn could think of a dozen very good reasons not to expose Carlton to a dinner with Henry. At the top of the list was his suspicion that Henry might somehow talk Lassiter out of seeing him anymore. “I’ll talk it over with him about it and get back to you.”

The next evening Lassiter pulled the Crown Vic into Henry’s driveway and he and Shawn sat contemplating the ordeal ahead. Shawn had made it perfectly obvious that he was passing the invitation along purely as a formality. He expected Lassiter to back out, ideally citing work as an excuse. Lassiter had thought it his responsibility to accept Henry’s invitation. It was a father’s job to protect his kid and meeting whomever his kid was dating was part of the job description. Of course, Lassiter admitted, all of his experience with meeting fathers had come about when he was dating their daughters. He was used to being the clean-cut career-oriented boy that parents liked more than their daughters did. As he turned off the engine it occurred to him that this dynamic might be

radically different now. Henry had been a cop in the 70s and that wasn't exactly a notoriously gay-friendly time for the service. *Not that it's all rainbows and parades now*, he thought.

"Come on, Lassie. Last chance to pretend we're sick and go home with a really nice bottle of wine," Shawn said, holding up the Pino Noir Lassiter had bought.

Lassiter unlatched his seatbelt and opened the car door.

"Let me point out that none of this would be happening if you hadn't told Henry about us." Lassiter stepped out of the car.

"Oh...I see," Shawn said, his voice heavy in sarcasm, "It's my fault."

"Yes, Shawn. Yes it is." He shut the door, smoothed the wrinkles out of his suit and adjusted his tie. *Time to face the firing squad.*

Henry greeted them at the door.

"Hey Shawn. Carlton, nice to see you."

"Mr. Spencer." Lassiter naturally reverted to the formality that had seen him through similar situations before.

"Henry is fine. There's no need for this to be any more awkward than it already is." Henry led them inside to the living room. Shawn and Lassiter sat on the sofa and Henry went into the kitchen, returning a moment later with beers. Lassiter took his gratefully. Drinking would give him something to do other than sweat under the glare of Henry, the human lie detector.

Henry took a swig of beer. He asked Lassiter a few harmless questions about work, congratulated him on his recent arrest of some car thieves, and asked if he'd been doing any fishing lately. They made pleasant chitchat for fifteen minutes and Lassiter finished his drink. Thus far, it was like all his previous visits to the Spencer house. *Maybe I've gotten all worked up for nothing*, he thought. Just as he began to relax, Henry broached a new subject.

"So Shawn tells me he came clean to you about his psychic gift."

"Yes he did," He glanced over at Shawn, who had finished his beer and was now slouching into the sofa. "He told me about his memory and about the...special training you gave him growing up." *And I'm not sure whether to shake your hand or punch you in the stomach*, Lassiter thought. *But I'll keep that to myself.*

"Then do you mind my asking why he's still walking around free?" Henry asked. "If I were you I'd have charged him with fraud by now."

"Thanks Dad," Shawn said. "That would put a bit of a crimp in the romance, don't you think?"

"So this is a romance for you, is it Shawn?" Henry asked. "Would you agree with that Carlton?"

"Uh, I guess so. Yes." Lassiter was beginning to feel flustered. He did not want to get into a discussion about his feelings for Shawn or the direction this relationship was headed. He hadn't worked that out in his own head yet, let alone even broached the subject with Shawn. He certainly wasn't ready for a 'what are your intentions toward my son' talk with Henry.

"It's not just about sex, if that's what you're getting at with your usual complete lack of subtlety." Shawn stood and walked to the fridge for another round of beer.

It suddenly dawned on Lassiter that he was being interrogated. It was classic: the first few minutes of chit-chat on their shared interests to establish a rapport, and now the confrontation in which Henry states his guilt and waits for him to confirm or deny it. *Well if that's how it was going to be, fine*, he thought. *Henry's not the only detective in the room.*

"It was nice of you to invite us over for dinner," Lassiter said, shifting the focus of the conversation. He stood up and walked over to Shawn, accepted one of the beers, then circled around to stand behind Henry and leaned slightly into his personal space. "I know that Shawn means a lot to you, and it's natural for you to be concerned about him and interested in his relationships." Lassiter developed his theme: Henry as the concerned parent, replacing Henry's own theme of himself as the police interrogator.

"Look, I stopped trying to protect—," Henry began, craning his neck awkwardly to look at Lassiter,

"—No, really, Henry," Lassiter interrupted Henry's denial and prevented him from shifting the subject. "I respect your desire to protect him. I would do the same thing in your place." He patted Henry's shoulder in a gesture of camaraderie and walked around to the front of the sofa again, keeping Henry shifting in his seat. Now he offered the suspect two possible motives, one more attractive than the other.

"You know, Henry, some people might think you invited me here to dissuade me from seeing Shawn. A lot of fathers would be disappointed if their son brought a boyfriend home." Lassiter looked down at Henry, who was sitting back, arms crossed. That was option one, Henry the insecure homophobe. He continued, moving into option two.

"But I think you invited us here to show that you're not one of those guys whose masculinity is tied up in his son. I don't think you're threatened by anything Shawn does. And I don't think you're so insecure that you're going to be freaked out by the mere fact

of us dating.”

“Okay detective, I confess!” Henry raised his hands in mock surrender. He grabbed his beer and stood up. “Let’s quit the playacting and eat before you get to the part where I give you both my blessing and help you pick out china patterns.”

As they went into the kitchen Shawn leaned over to Lassiter.

“That was fun. You didn’t tell me you guys were going to do Spy vs. Spy.”

As they ate Henry broached a new topic.

“Did Shawn tell you I got some pictures of the two of you in the mail?” He gestured to them with his fork.

Lassiter finished the bite of steak he was chewing and took a drink of beer. “Yes. That’s the second batch we know about.”

“Well if you ask me—and I don’t know why Shawn hasn’t—the perp is probably another cop.”

“Really?” Lassiter furrowed his brow and glanced over at Shawn then back to Henry.

“Why do you say that?”

“Well for starters, you put a fellow cop behind bars. I hear that internal affairs is putting the gang unit under a microscope because of you two.”

“To be accurate,” Shawn said, “they’re doing that because of Drimmer.”

“The other guys in the gang unit, not to mention the rest of the department, might not see it that way. When I was on the force cops stuck together. And Shawn is an outsider who put away a cop and brought IA down on all their heads.”

“Thanks a lot,” Shawn said.

“I’m just telling you how I think they might see it in the gang unit.”

“I’m glad IA is investigating them,” Shawn said. “They’re probably all crooked.”

“What are you basing that on?” Lassiter asked. However much he liked Shawn he still felt a surge of defensiveness when he criticized the force.

“Come on! I’ve watched The Shield. If Drimmer was dirty then maybe the whole gang unit is.”

“Real life isn’t like The Shield, Shawn.” Lassiter said. “At least not in Santa Barbara.”

"A cop doesn't have to be dirty to resent one of his team getting dragged through court and thrown in jail, Shawn. Prison isn't a great place for an ex-cop. Any one of those gang unit guys might be pissed about it."

"Henry's right," Lassiter said. "The photos could be some kind of a payback for Drimmer designed to make us sweat, or dissuade us from testifying against him at the trial." *If it was someone in the gang unit that narrowed it down to detectives Garcia, Miles or Connors.* Miles was just obnoxious enough to pull something like this, but Lassiter suspected he lacked the self-control to engage in a war of nerves involving anonymous pictures. *Garcia or Connors, then.*

"Or since one of the packages you know about was sent to the station it could be intended to turn potential witnesses in the Drimmer case against the two of you."

Lassiter felt his stomach drop. Henry's theory was pretty sound. Also, the idea that there might be more photos out there that he didn't know about yet made him want to vomit.

"Outing you two before the trial would be a nice distraction," Henry continued. "Since it was part of Drimmer's story that the two of you were dating it might make people question how much of his other statements were true."

"We wouldn't have to worry about being outed if we just told everyone," Shawn said.

"If I were you," Henry addressed Lassiter. "Well let's be honest here, if I were you I wouldn't have considered dating Shawn in the first place. But if I did, I wouldn't even think about letting anyone at work know."

"Luckily dad, things have changed since the 50s. Cops spend less time beating people with rubber hoses and trying to keep schools from integrating. I hear you're even required to read suspects their rights now."

"I wouldn't be making jokes in your position, Shawn." Henry pointed his fork at Lassiter. "You can sure as hell bet this isn't funny to Carlton."

At Lassiter's place that night Lassiter turned to Shawn as they settled down to sleep.

"I don't want you to think that there's anything about us that I'm ashamed of here," he began. "That's not why I don't want to tell people at work."

"Then what is it?" Shawn asked.

"I still..." Lassiter struggled to find words that didn't sound so stupid in his head, but came up empty. "I don't feel gay. Coming out seems pretty stupid when I don't feel any different."

“I’m cool with however you want to define yourself, Lassie,” Shawn said. “You can be the Anne to my Ellen—although given the way that relationship ended maybe it’s not such a good example. If you ask me to call you Celestia I’ll have to send you back to the mothership.” He tilted his head thoughtfully for a minute. “But just so you know, this—“ he motioned to the two of them and to the bed they were in, and laughed. “This is pretty gay.”

“I don’t dispute that what we’re doing is gay, but I don’t feel gay.”

“What do you think gay feels like?”

“Well I still like women. That doesn’t feel very gay.”

“I like women too Lassie. O’Hara had this green blouse on today that really—well you get the idea. Does bisexual feel like a better label? Or do you want to go with queer? I didn’t think you’d like bent, because ‘bent cop’ means something different in cop-speak.”

“The whole label thing just feels weird. I’m exactly the same as I was before. Just because we’re together doesn’t mean I suddenly fit into a subculture.”

“You’re right, Lassie. You’re the only guy in history who’s dating another guy but has no urge to watch musical theatre or redecorate his apartment.”

“Forget it.” He sighed. “Maybe it’s a time release thing.”

Shawn moved over to press his body against Lassiter’s.

“The tingle tells you it’s working.”

Chapter 3

“Lassiter.” Detective Garcia grabbed his arm as he was about to walk into the break room. “We need to talk.” Garcia had been on the gang unit since the beginning. He and Drimmer used to play football together on the weekends.

Great, Lassiter thought, here comes the confrontation about Drimmer and IA and whatever else they think I'm to blame for. Lassiter stretched himself out to his full height. Garcia was only 5'8,” but he was stocky and muscular. *Of course you don't get to be on the gang unit by being easily intimidated,* Lassiter reminded himself.

“Okay. Talk.”

“In private.” Garcia pulled Lassiter toward the interrogation observation room.

Lassiter was hesitant to get into it with Garcia there in the hall, but as he entered the room he thought of the self-defence rule ‘never let the attacker take you to the second crime scene.’ He turned, ready to defend himself verbally or physically if necessary.

“Sorry for the cloak and dagger,” Garcia said, “but Internal Affairs is all over us since that Drimmer thing.”

“That's not my fault,” Lassiter said. “That's all on Drimmer.”

“I know, I know,” Garcia said dejectedly. “The gang unit has done some great work, but every bust we made is under review now because of him. I want to see this trial over with fast so we can get back to work.” He shook his head. “I talked to John and told him he should cut a deal and plead out. But the guy's afraid to tell his mom that he's guilty. Can you believe it? Thirty-eight, tough cop, and the guy's still afraid of his mother.”

Actually, I can believe it completely, Lassiter reflected, thinking of his own mother.

“But that's not why I'm here.” Garcia pulled an envelope out of his jacket. “This came today, addressed to the gang unit. Luckily I got the mail before the rest of the guys saw it.”

Lassiter opened the envelope, a cold sense of dread creeping up his neck. The pictures were of him and Shawn at a clothing store taken not long after their Ventura trip. They hadn't been what Carlton would have called affectionate, but some of the photos were definitely suggestive. In one Shawn was leaning over his shoulder holding a tie up against his shirt. This time there was a note included, typewritten on cheap copy paper. It was addressed to the gang unit members by name. It accused Lassiter of having killed Chavez and Loggins and set Detective Drimmer up to take the fall because he'd discovered that Lassiter and Shawn were lovers.

As if dating Shawn is some big crime I'd kill to cover up, Lassiter thought. He frowned at the letter. Whoever did this knew the names of the members of the gang unit. And it isn't Garcia, unless this is some deception strategy, in which case he's twice as clever as I thought he was.

"I don't know what's going on between you two," Garcia said, "And I don't really care. But this kind of thing," he pointed a stubby finger at the letter, "could really bite us in the ass at trial."

"I appreciate you bringing this to me," Lassiter said. "I know that you and Drimmer were friends and—"

"Save it, Carlton." Garcia cut in. "I know John Drimmer. I looked him in the eye and I know he did it. I don't care if he was right about you two or not. It's none of my business. But I know you aren't going to shoot a guy in the head and frame another cop to cover up an affair. You're too straight-laced." He dropped the envelope and photos on the table and moved to the door. "So I'm going to pretend I never saw this, and if I were you I'd put my psychic friend onto finding out who sent this before we have to walk into a courtroom."

Shawn arrived at Lassiter's early on Saturday morning. He was wearing the same red shirt and jeans he'd worn in San Francisco.

"My upstairs neighbours are breaking up," he said.

"You don't even know your neighbours, Shawn. How can you possibly know they're breaking up?"

"The wife used to pick up their mail every morning. Now she's just picking up her own. His is still there in the box."

"There could be a dozen reasons for why she's doing that."

"No dude, think about it. You'll see I'm right."

Lassiter sighed. *Shawn usually was right.*

"I've got a present for you." Shawn handed him a bright red folder thick with paper. He stood there expectantly, vibrating with that boundless energy of his.

"What's this?" Lassiter looked at the folder, confused. *Had Shawn brought him a case?*

"It's my blood work. I'm completely disease free, so you can feel free to bone me without fear of smallpox or miners lung or the heartbreak of psoriasis."

“You think I’ve been hesitant to have sex because I think you’re diseased?” Lassiter flipped through the report with a growing sense of amusement. *Was there anything they hadn’t tested him for? This even includes his vaccination reports from school.*

“You’ll notice that I did catch hoof and mouth in the fifth grade after a trip to a petting zoo. Interesting fact, llamas aren’t as friendly as they appear.”

Lassiter put the report on the coffee table. “I’m not interested in your disease history, Shawn. Well, I am, but that’s not why I haven’t been having sex with you—well, we’ve been having sex, but—you know what I mean.”

“Okay, if you’re not scared of cooties, then what’s the hold up? Is anal sex just too gay to you? Are blowjobs the new handshake?”

“Since you mention it, anal sex does seem more gay than oral sex, yes, but that’s not my point either.”

“Is it the sodomy? Are you way more Catholic than I thought? Is there a Church loophole that includes everything but anal? Wow—butt anal—I did not mean for that to sound like a pun.”

“It’s not Catholicism. I don’t even go to Church—well, maybe at Christmas—but this has got nothing to do with religion.” They were going to have to have that talk. *Damn*, Lassiter thought. *There go my plans to take Shawn to paintball today. I’ll be lucky if he’s even talking to me afterwards.*

“That kind of penetration is really intimate,” he began, “And I’m not ready to be that vulnerable with you. I need to establish a greater level of trust.”

“You don’t trust me?” Shawn’s face fell and he stepped away from Lassiter.

“Don’t take it so hard. Trust isn’t easy for me.” *If you need proof you can ask my former wife*, Lassiter thought bitterly.

“When have I lied to you?” Shawn asked, indignantly. “Okay, excluding all the times I said I was psychic. When have I lied to you recently?”

Here goes, Lassiter thought.

“Frankly, Shawn, I think you lie to me pretty often.” *There, he’d said it.*

“I what?” Shawn looked dismayed and confused, like he couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“Look, I’m not mad. Pretending that dating a guy is all new to you is your way of making

me feel special. I appreciate that. But it's not necessary. It's okay that you're more experienced in this than I am."

"But I'm totally not. I'm a big gay virgin. I'm a girgin."

"I'm not that naïve, Shawn. It just doesn't add up."

"How so detective? Please! Dazzle me with your deductions."

"Okay. You're way more relaxed about this than I am. You're comfortable telling your friends and your family about us. You're more knowledgeable about gay culture, and frankly, you're better in bed than I am. I just don't buy that this is your first same-sex relationship."

"You don't buy it?" Shawn's voice held a degree of venom Lassiter hadn't heard him use before. Gone was the cocky irreverent Shawn. This was a very angry Shawn.

"And I don't need to. I'm not a hypocrite. We've both had previous relationships. I just wish you could be honest with me about yours."

"Wow. I don't know what to say." Shawn lost his usual slouch and his face went almost blank.

"Let's just talk like real people. Tell me about your first boyfriend. I promise I won't be jealous. Really."

"There's no point, is there? No matter what I say you'll think I'm lying," Shawn said petulantly.

"Not if it sounds like the truth."

"What's that sound like, Lassie? How big a whore do you want me to confess to being? What are you expecting to hear?"

Lassiter was fed up. In the beginning, he'd let it slide when Shawn made comments that suggested Lassiter was going 'where no man had gone before.' He'd encountered that kind of thing with girlfriends in high school and college. It wasn't malicious; it was just meant to stroke his ego. But Shawn had continued the pretence, even when they weren't in bed. It hurt Lassiter's feelings, implying that he was gullible and stupid.

Spencer was so flirtatious, so free with his body, such a risk-taker; he would have no trouble getting sexual partners. As a general rule, men weren't very discriminating when it came to sex. Lassiter did the math. Even assuming that he was telling the truth about highschool, and he'd only been sexually active for twelve years, there were fifty-two weeks in a year. Shawn could easily have gotten laid once a week if he wanted to. Even taking off a few weeks a year, that was over six hundred possible partners. It boggled the

mind.

The whole 'you're the first' charade was putting too much pressure on him. He was still trying to deal with the changes in his self-perception that their relationship entailed. He needed to work things out in his own head. He liked Shawn—hell, maybe he even loved him a little—but in queer years, he was only two months old. Of course he wasn't ready to come out at work, or tell his family, or any of the other things Shawn could do so effortlessly. He hadn't even claimed his fifty dollars from Russell Santos yet. It was unfair to judge him on the same standard as Shawn, who'd probably been out for ages. Shawn's lie, however well-meaning, was just more salt in the wound. He'd been hesitant to broach the subject because it didn't happen often enough to make him risk a relationship that was otherwise going well.

But fine, if Spencer insists on knowing, I'll just tell him. He's got no one to blame but himself.

"Okay," Lassiter said. "I assume you've been with a lot of guys. More than I have fingers to count. Frankly I assume you've had more one-night-stands than I've had birthdays. But I don't care. I really don't care."

"Good to know. I thought you cared a lot." Shawn turned and walked out, slamming the door behind him.

They were definitely not going to paintball.

Shawn walked into the Psych office carrying two smoothies. He'd gone home and cried for an hour, but was now feeling ready to find a solution to his problem. And solutions came from Gus and his magic head. *Provided Gus was still talking to him.* He had been sacrificing some quality Gus time during his hermiting phase with Lassie. He thought about trying to explain that amazing sex outranked watching Thundercats on DVD, but he wasn't sure if he agreed with the idea in principle.

He set the blueberry smoothie on the desk next to Gus and took his pineapple one across to the couch.

"Dude, why does everyone think I'm a big man-whore?"

"Do you really want the answer to that question?" Gus asked, looking up over the top of his computer, where he was reading the new edition of Safe Cracker online magazine.

"Yes, I seriously do."

"Well I can't speak for everyone, but my opinion is based on fact." Gus took a sip from his smoothie. "As in, I know for a fact that you slept with half the women who worked at

the Red Robin the year I finished college.”

“Come on Gus! You know I got no action in high school, despite my fabulous fashion sense and awesome hair. I had some accumulated oats to sow. Besides, those golf shirts are adorable.”

“Point taken. But you also travelled the country on your two-jobs-a-year tour of America, and probably met people who hadn't seen you get pantsed weekly by Jimmy Nickels. I assume that wasn't a period of enforced celibacy.”

“Admittedly, I did meet some friendly people between high school and here. I'm not claiming to be a Pathfinder.”

“The Pathfinders is a children's club, Shawn. I think you mean the Promisekeepers.”

“I've heard it both ways. My point is, sure, I'm familiar with the sweet art of physical love, but I'm not some kind of Don Juan. I'm more like Juan Valdez, being there when you need him with a smile and a cup of coffee and a handsome 'stache.

“Okay, perhaps it's because you flirt with any person within a ten-foot radius, regardless of their age or sex.”

“I'm just a friendly guy with natural exuberance. So I flirt a little. I'm not trying to get everyone into bed.”

“I find that hard to believe. Remember when you tried to get those co-eds interested in an adult version of Red Rover?”

“It might come as a shock, but not everyone actually takes me seriously.”

“Now that, I find easy to believe. But it still makes you seem like you're not very discriminating.”

“Lassie and I had our first big fight because he thought I'm lying about not having slept with a guy before.”

“Well, aren't you?”

“No! Et tu, Gus?”

“You had me fooled. Given how quick you were to tell me and your dad, I just assumed this wasn't your first time at the rodeo, so to speak.”

“Who did you think I'd been shagging, dude? Since I moved back, you and I spend almost all our time together. Frankly, most people probably think I'm sleeping with you!”

"I sincerely hope no one thinks that. But as for whom you might have dated, I narrowed it down to Ricky Walker or Carlos Dasilva. Both came out after highschool. You go to the same gym as Ricky and he also loves pineapple smoothies, so you could have hooked up that way. Carlos graduated top of his class at MIT and runs his own computer business downtown. He donates generously to the museum, the aquarium and the planetarium. You could have met him while we were on a case."

"He sounds so great, you should date him."

"If he was a girl, I might consider it."

"That's very open-minded of you, Gus. But seriously, I haven't been getting it on with Ricky or Carlos or any of the other original members of Menudo."

"Don't be hatin' on Menudo." Gus took a long drink of his smoothie. "Level with me Shawn. You really haven't slept with any other guy but Lassiter?"

"No! Come on! I told you the day after I slept with Lassiter. How could I possibly be secretly slutty and not have told you already?"

"Good point. You can't keep a secret very well."

"But now Lassie thinks I've been lying to him and assuming he was just too dumb to figure it out."

"I'm not surprised he has trouble trusting you after you dropped the 'Psych is a big fraud' bombshell on him." Gus leaned forward. "Oh, and in future, when you're going to tell an officer of the law something that might get me arrested and thrown in jail, or shot by a cop who feels betrayed, how about giving me a heads up?"

"My bad. You're right. I suck at friendship too."

"It takes a big man to admit that."

"Then if you've forgiven me, tell me how to make it right with Lassie."

"You can't. You're the boy who cried wolf. No one comes running anymore and the wolf eats you. That's why the story has a moral."

"So I'm wolf food. There's no way out of this?"

"Maybe they make a 'Sorry I'm such a slut' card." Gus laughed.

Shawn hated to admit it, but Gus had a point. There wasn't any obvious way to convince Lassiter that he really hadn't slept with another guy before. It didn't matter how true it was if Lassie couldn't bring himself to believe it. *But maybe there was another way out.*

If pretending to be the gay Wilt Chamberlain was what it took to win Lassie's heart, what did it hurt?

Chapter 4

Lassiter was having a bad Monday. He'd been up late with Shawn the night before. They'd had a good heart-to-heart and Shawn had apologized for lying about his sexual history. He'd had even acknowledged that his promiscuity was probably a response to low self-esteem developed as a result of growing up with Henry. Lassiter could see that Henry would make anyone feel inadequate.

That night they'd gone to a nightclub called the Wildcat Lounge for its alternative/gay night. It wasn't his style of music and he didn't exactly fit in, but the booths were nice and he'd enjoyed the fibre optic dome, which had reminded him of the planetarium. Given their snap-happy stalker, they'd driven around for forty minutes before he'd felt certain they weren't being tailed. Now he wanted nothing more than to take a nap, but instead he was going to be sorting through a stack of paperwork and squinting at his computer all day. And McNab had just told him that Vick wanted to see him in her office. He popped some Aspirin in his mouth and downed them with the cold remains of his third cup of coffee.

Lassiter knocked and entered. Vick was looking at him with a concerned face.

"Close the door, Carlton, and sit down." *She was using his first name again. That's probably not good.*

"I got some interesting mail this morning," Vick said. "I'm hoping you can enlighten me." She passed a manila envelope across the desk to him. It was postmarked Santa Barbara and the typewritten address read, 'Chief Karen Vick, Santa Barbara Police Department.' Lassiter's brain immediately began a torrent of swearing.

He opened the envelope and pulled out the contents. It contained three enlarged photographs of him and Shawn. The first showed them entering Lassiter's apartment. *Fine*, he thought quickly. *I can explain that. We're discussing that fake dognapping case.* The second photo had been taken through the window of his apartment with some kind of telescopic lens. He and Shawn had their arms around each other. *More difficult to explain, but not entirely impossible.* In the third photo they were clearly caught in a passionate lip lock. *Not a lot of wiggle room on this one.* Since the first photos had arrived he'd been extra careful, but these had been taken at least a week before the first batch even showed up. *He held off on sending the really juicy photos just to taunt me. That sick bastard.*

"The letter doesn't provide much to go on as far as the identity of the sender," Vick said, "But it does suggest a particular interpretation of the pictures." Lassiter looked at the letter. Like the note Garcia had received, it was typewritten and on cheap copy paper. It read simply, 'Detective John Drimmer was right about these two. What else was he right about?'

Carlton frowned in concentration. He could try to lie, but whatever he came up with was likely to be pretty transparent. Vick was his superior officer, and he liked to think she was his friend. She deserved the truth, even if it might change how she saw him from then on.

"The letter is...incorrect," he said. "But the photos pretty much speak for themselves." *Well, there went keeping his private life private.*

"How long has this been going on, Carlton?" Chief Vick's face looked concerned rather than angry or disgusted. This alarmed Carlton more than any homophobic reaction might have done.

"Since the Thursday last month, when I asked for some time off." *I could go into an explanation, Carlton thought, but the easiest way out of this is to stick to fact, not feelings.*

"Two months?" Vick leaned back in her chair. She didn't look pleased.

"Yes."

"Is it serious?"

"It's getting there."

"Are you out?" She raised her voice slightly, "I mean, am I the last one in the station to know about this?"

"God no! Nobody knows. I mean, I thought nobody knew." *Until these damn photos started showing up.* He put the contents back into the envelope and placed it on her desk. "O'Hara got a similar package addressed to the station, and Henry got one at home, and Garcia intercepted one sent to the gang unit. These are the first photos with anything *incriminating* in them," Lassiter hated using that word to describe kissing Shawn but under the circumstances it seemed to fit. "Also Garcia got a letter accusing me of killing Chavez and Loggins, and framing Drimmer."

"So let me get this straight detective," Vick was using her deliberately calm voice, "someone has been stalking you and accusing you of murder and corruption, and you didn't think I ought to know about it?"

"It felt like a personal issue. I made a judgement call. I guess I was wrong." The truth was, he had planned to tell Vick, but only after they'd been dating for a year, when they would have qualified for same-sex partner benefits.

"Ya think?" Chief Vick took the envelope and passed it back to Lassiter. "You can keep that. I don't know if you have a suspect, but I suggest that you and Spencer figure out who's been spying on you. Pronto."

"I'll get right on it. In my free time, I mean."

"Whenever. As for this thing with Mr. Spencer...there's no rule against dating a consultant." He didn't bother to tell her that he had already looked that up in the department regulations. "I understand if you want to keep it private, and I won't interfere with that." Lassiter breathed a sigh of relief. "However, Mr. Spencer is a valued resource, and I'd hate for any messy break-up to interfere with our ability to access that resource. Do I make myself clear?"

"Absolutely." He stood up and walked to the door with the envelope.

"I really mean it when I say that I wish you the best Carlton," Vick said. "Whomever you're with."

"Thank-you, Karen. I appreciate that."

Shawn was sitting in the Psych office, tossing a Super Ball repeatedly against the wall.

"Henry's right, you know. Carlton is probably never going to come out at work unless he knows beforehand what will happen."

"And since neither of you has a time machine, Lassiter will just have to stay in the closet," Gus said. "I guess that means you won't be his date for any police socials."

"I know. So I'm going to have to do something about it."

Gus intercepted the ball and held it out of Shawn's reach.

"Tell me you're not going to out him at work!"

"Of course not." Shawn pouted and held out his hands for the ball. Gus relented and Shawn resumed his game. "I'm just going to have to take one for the team is all."

Gus didn't even want to know what that meant.

Shawn strolled into the station just after noon. The time had been well chosen. Buzz was talking to Detective Miles of the gang unit. O'Hara and Lassiter were at their desk doing paperwork, and Chief Vick was just returning to her office with takeout. *It was the perfect wave of coming-outness.*

"Can I have your attention please?" he said in a loud voice, and clapped his hands sharply. Everyone looked up and Vick stopped mid-stride and stood staring at him. "I just wanted to share my good news with the station. I want to you all to know that I'm dating a man."

Buzz and O'Hara looked surprised, but not that surprised. *Is it my sense of style or the flamboyance that tipped them off?* Shawn wondered. He noted that Chief Vick's eyes looked quickly at Lassiter and then back to Shawn. *He's told Chief Vick about us. Way to go, Lassie!* Lassiter looked as if he had turned to stone. *He thinks I'm here to out him,* Shawn realized.

"Is it Gus?" Buzz asked curiously, his tone even and friendly. *Nice, Buzz. I knew we could count on you.*

"Gus? No. Good God, No. No! That would be like dating my brother. If I had a brother. A slightly shorter, adopted brother."

"Are you the butch or the bitch?" Miles asked, laughing. *Chalk one up for unsupportive and homophobic. Big surprise, he used to work with Drimmer. He's probably planning to hold up an Armenian money train this week.*

"We're not a butch-bitch couple," Shawn said, unfazed. "We've got more of a Kirk/Spock thing going on."

"Well let me be the first to offer my congratulations," O'Hara said, glaring at Miles. "It's brave of you to be so honest. When do we get to meet this love interest?"

"He's not ready to be introduced to people," Shawn said. "I'm choosing to respect his decision. Not everyone comes out at the same pace. I, for example, am taking the Speed Racer method."

O'Hara walked over to Lassiter and kicked the side of his foot with hers.

"Say something supportive, Carlton!" she hissed at him through her smile.

"I hope he's worth it, Spencer." Lassiter picked up some papers and spun his chair back toward the computer, pretending to work. *Oh sweet, sweet Lassie. Of course you're worth it.*

Chief Vick cleared her throat. "I agree with O'Hara. It's brave of you to share that with us. This station has a very clear cultural diversity policy and I would be highly disappointed if any of our employees were less than courteous and professional about this issue." She made eye contact with Miles. "If you have any problems with one of my officers don't hesitate to let me know. I can always find an opening for them in one of the state's many cultural awareness training seminars." *And there's Vick's blessing wrapped in a pretty threat like a pig in a blanket. I love it when a plan comes together.*

"Thanks, Chief. I don't expect any problems." He looked at Miles briefly. "In fact, I have a psychic premonition that bad things lie in store for anyone who disturbs the supportive vibes with their negative energy."

Lassiter's day was just getting worse and worse. He was tired and had a splitting headache. He'd drunk too much coffee and felt all queasy inside. Their stalker had outed him to his boss and accused him of homicide. And his boyfriend (although he was seriously reconsidering that designation) had come out to everyone in his workplace in a very loud scene. As soon as he could Lassiter escaped to the file room to get some peace and quiet and figure things out.

What, in the name of Smith and Wesson, does Spencer think he's doing? He clearly doesn't care about me or my career. This whole thing between us is over.

But the agreement was that Shawn wouldn't out me. Technically, he hasn't outed anyone but himself.

But he must have known the position this would put me in.

It's not so bad. Vick already knew, so there wasn't any damage done there. Buzz assumed Shawn was dating Gus, which makes sense in a way. O'Hara was supportive, but clearly not suspicious of me, which was a kind of miracle.

He was surprised at how well Buzz and O'Hara had taken it. He had expected them to be pleasant to Shawn's face, but they had remained pleasant about it after he left. Buzz asked if the occasion required a card or a gift, probably thinking of when Shawn had given him a cat as a wedding present. O'Hara had started making plans to host a welcome dinner to which Shawn could be talked into bringing the boyfriend. Lassiter had almost laughed out loud, knowing that the boyfriend in question had no intention of attending such an event. *Still*, he thought, *it was nice that she cared enough to want to include him.* Chief Vick had his back, laying down the law about professional expectations. Miles, of course, had been a total asshole. Lassiter wasn't in the least surprised. The guy was an all around jerk on pretty much every issue.

Lassiter heard the door open and he picked up a box and tried to look busy by flipping through the files inside.

Sweet Mother of Mercy! He'd grabbed the box on that damn Cruickshanks case. The stupid incident in the aisle had started this whole crazy career-destroying nightmare.

Lassiter looked up to see Detective Cameron Miles pulling down a box of reports.

"Lassiter."

"Miles."

"So our head psychic's a queer." Miles said.

"Shut up, Miles." The headache, which had swelled to encompass the whole front of his head, began to throb painfully.

"No, seriously. You were there. He announced it and everything." Somehow it was difficult to stay angry at Spencer when Miles was being such a dick.

"What's it to you who Spencer sees?"

"I'm just saying, Drimmer and me had him pegged for queer from day one."

Lassiter made eye contact with Miles and loomed in what he hoped was a menacing manner. It was difficult; Miles wasn't much shorter than Lassiter.

"Drimmer was a liar and a dirty cop," Lassiter reminded him. "You really want to put yourself in the same category?"

"All I'm saying is that we can do without queers around. They carry disease and they're always trying to put the moves on you. I'm surprised you haven't popped Spencer in the mouth the way he is around you sometimes."

"How is he around me, Miles?" *This was going to a very bad place very quickly.*

"He's so goddamned touch-feely. Queers are all like that," Miles said. "He so much as looks at me wrong and I'll push that nose into the back of his head."

Lassiter felt an enormous wave of anger well up within him. He was angry that had to defend himself to other cops on the Drimmer situation. He was angry about the anonymous photos, and about being afraid to come out at work. He was angry about Miles and all the snide remarks he knew he'd be making about Shawn over the next few weeks. Most of all he was angry that guys like Drimmer and Miles were willing to hurt Shawn without a second thought. Lassiter wasn't going to let that happen. In that moment he realized that he was far more angry than he was scared.

Lassiter set the Cruickshanks box down and swivelled toward Miles. He delivered a smooth right jab to his gut. The gang unit detective bent double and gushed air.

Lassiter leaned in, grabbed Miles by the hair and pulled him up so his ear was within range of Lassiter's mouth. "If you so much as annoy him," he said through gritted teeth, "I will fuck you up beyond all recognition." He levered Miles into a standing position and smoothed down the front of his shirt where the blow had creased it. "Is that touchy-feely enough for you?"

Chapter 5

The Drimmer case came to trial just as it began to get really warm outside. Lassiter wore the suit and tie he always wore when he had to appear in court. He sat in the hall until called to the stand. Shawn had testified earlier and was now in the gallery with Guster, Henry, and O'Hara. On the other side of the gallery were Garcia and Miles (judiciously avoiding eye contact with him), and Drimmer's mother who glared at him from her wheelchair as he took the stand. The woman was in her late 60s, and had already lost a leg to diabetes, and now her only son was going to jail. He almost felt guilty until he remembered how Drimmer had hit Shawn in the head and tried to kill them both.

He sat rigidly in the witness chair and prepared himself for the worst. He had spent all night imagining how the defence attorney might bring up his relationship with Shawn. His favourite dreaded scenario involved the lawyer holding up an envelope that had arrived anonymously in the mail and saying he'd like to submit these photographs as evidence. "Exactly when did Detective Drimmer find out about your secret homosexual affair?" the dream attorney would ask. He'd never lied under oath, and he wasn't about to start now. *If they ask me a direct question, I'll just tell the truth*, he decided. Still, he was glad it wasn't his mother glaring at him from the gallery.

But none of his fears were realized. The questions from both attorneys were straightforward and he answered them as clearly and concisely as possible. When the court recessed for lunch he joined O'Hara, Henry, Guster and Shawn at a nearby restaurant. He should have been feeling relief, and he was in a way. But he also felt like a heel because O'Hara was the only person at the table who didn't know he was dating Shawn. She was his partner, and he couldn't seem to bring himself to tell her. It wasn't that he didn't think she'd be supportive; he was pretty certain that she would. But he knew it would change their dynamic if he was suddenly someone who needed support. He didn't want his junior detective looking at him with pity in those big blue eyes. He was sure she was going to pick up on some of the looks that were flashing back and forth between Henry, Guster and Shawn. Shawn in particular kept looking at him and motioning toward O'Hara with a look that had 'tell her, already!' written all over it. *He probably would tell her*, he thought, *but not here at lunch with everyone looking at him*. Just as they were finishing Lassiter got a phone call. It was the prosecutor. Drimmer's lawyer had cut a deal. He was pleading guilty. Lassiter's headache lifted.

An hour later Shawn and Lassiter were in the Crown Vic, headed for a destination Shawn refused to reveal. He simply yelled out driving directions whenever he happened to look up from his copy of Out Magazine.

"Give me a hint," Lassiter said. "At least enough of a hint to know if I should be looking for an exit sign."

"I'll give you two hints. Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin will be there."

"Is it a cemetery? Because they're both dead."

"Only physically dead. In spirit, and through the magic of impersonation, they're at the club we're going to."

"Interesting. It has to be better than that—what the hell is this idiot doing?" An SUV had hove into view behind them and was tailgating them dangerously.

"Are you impeding the flow of traffic with your ridiculous adherence to the posted speed limit?" Shawn asked.

"I'm driving under the legal 45 mph for this area if that's what you mean."

"I thought so. Just let him pass."

"He's not passing."

"Then pull over or something."

Lassiter motioned for the SUV to pass and pulled closer to the shoulder. The other vehicle sped up. Just as it was abreast of the Crown Vic, it smashed heavily into the side of the car. Lassiter swore, swerved onto the shoulder and grazed the guardrail before he pulled back onto the tarmac.

"What the hell?" Shawn looked up from his magazine in time to glimpse the grey Ford Explorer. "Oh. It's our stalker!" This time Shawn noticed the disability symbol on the California licence plate.

"The crazy bastard's trying to kill us." Lassiter said.

The Explorer slowed until it was even with the car again and then turned sharply into their lane, smashing into the wheel well and cutting them off. Lassiter swerved and the Crown Vic did a doughnut. Shawn watched in shock as the car hit the guardrail and crashed through. The last thing he remembered was seeing rocks and sand approaching them from far away at an extremely rapid pace.

When Shawn regained consciousness he was dangling forward in his seat belt and covered in white powder from the airbag. Through the smashed windshield he could see nothing but sand and rocks.

"Carlton, are you okay? Speak to me, buddy." He reached over and put his hand on Lassiter's chest. He was breathing. Shawn felt for a pulse. Carlton was alive, but he had some cuts to his face and Shawn didn't like the angle of his left arm. He pulled his cell out of the glove compartment and called 911.

"Hang in there," he said to the unconscious man, "They're going to come get us."

It occurred to Shawn that whoever had been driving the Explorer might be sticking around to finish the job. He reached over to Lassiter's body and manoeuvred the gun out of his holster. Now he needed to see outside. The door on his side of the car wouldn't open, but the rear window on the driver's side was completely smashed from where the SUV had hit it. He unlatched his seatbelt and crawled up into the back seat and out the window. As he did so he noticed that his right ankle hurt like crazy.

Hopping on his good foot and hanging onto the car for support, Shawn examined the scene of the crash. The Crown Vic had fallen down the 150 ft cliff face and now lay propped on her nose in the sand and rocks. Only the slight angle of the drop-off had prevented the vehicle from tumbling over. Holding the gun with his finger on the safety, he scanned the top of the cliff; nobody was lurking about. Whoever had tried to kill them had assumed the job was done and fled the scene. Shawn moved to the driver's door and pulled. It didn't budge. He hopped to a nearby outcrop and sat, waiting for the ambulance. As the adrenaline in his body began to dissipate the pain in his ankle increased. The sun was setting into the ocean like a melting Creamsicle and birds were flying across the water, but the most beautiful sight for Shawn that evening was the ambulance crew working their way down the cliff face.

Lassiter awoke in the hospital, lying in a bed, with O'Hara peering over him, making her serious face.

"Carlton, it's me. You're okay; you're in the hospital."

"I'm not blind, O'Hara. I can see that. Where's Shawn?"

"He's in x-ray."

"Is he okay?"

"He's fine."

"If he's fine then why is he in x-ray?"

"He might have a fractured ankle. Might. How are you feeling?"

"My hip and my shoulder hurt. Am I injured?"

"You're mostly just bruised. Your shoulder popped out of joint. The doctor fixed that while you were unconscious. They've got you on painkillers, but if it hurts too much let me know and I'll get someone to up the dosage."

"I don't need any more drugs." What he really needed was to see Shawn. He didn't think O'Hara would lie to him, but he really needed to see for himself that Shawn was okay.

She walked over and closed the door then returned to Lassiter's bedside.

"Look, I don't want to overstep the boundaries here, but..." she leaned in and spoke quickly, "You're the boyfriend Shawn was talking about, aren't you?"

"Yeah. I'm the boyfriend." *There. She knew. She wasn't good with secrets, but she was his partner, and she deserved to know. Especially since she had finally worked it out on her own.*

"I knew it!" She smiled wide and did a celebratory fist pump with both hands. Her eyes were shining and she was looking at Lassiter like she'd just solved a homicide. "The photos, and the two of you in the car, and I heard you had a scene with Miles at work about Shawn coming out. I thought, 'no it can't be him, he's too prim and proper,' but then I thought about how freaked out you were by Drimmer's suicide letter plan and it just all made sense." *She was babbling, the way she tended to do when she got excited. But she wasn't wrong.*

"Who else knows?" She asked.

"Vick knows, and Shawn told Guster and Henry."

"That's it?"

"That's it. Although Miles could probably figure it out if he wasn't thick as a post. My fist to his gut should have been a hint." Lassiter motioned her to come closer and she leaned in.

"What is it? Are you in pain?" She looked over his tubes and wires for something amiss.

"Nothing's wrong. But if it's possible, can you bring Shawn here before he leaves? I hate to ask, but I'd just like to see for myself that he's okay."

"Aw, Lassiter. That's really sweet." *Great. She's looking at me like I've just stepped off the cover of Romance Comics. This! This is why I didn't want to tell her.*

The door opened and Henry Spencer popped his head inside.

"Henry," Lassiter said. "Join the party."

Henry stood by Lassiter's bedside with his hands in his pockets. Juliet excused herself and left them alone.

"Hey Carlton. How are you?"

"Fine. How's Shawn's ankle?"

"It's sprained. He's fine. He's checking himself out, against his doctor's recommendation. They want to keep him overnight for observation.

"Bring him in here and I'll try to talk some sense into him," Lassiter said. *He was pretty sure Henry would see right through him but it was worth a shot.*

"He wants to see you too," Henry assured him. "I heard he made a big scene at the station a while back."

"Yeah. He came out to everyone. Very loudly." Now that Lassiter thought back on the scene it didn't seem as hellish. In fact he found himself laughing at the way Shawn had dealt with Miles.

"And how about you?"

"The anonymous photographer pretty much took care of that. O'Hara knows. Vick knows. Garcia and Miles in the gang unit probably know. Shawn's right. I may as well just put his picture up on my desk."

"What does Shawn know about coming out at work?" Henry asked rhetorically. "He runs a fake detective agency. He's one step away from living in a tree fort with a sign that says 'no girls allowed.'"

"He knows what he's talking about when it comes to being open about who he's with. That puts him ahead of me." *It felt pretty weird to think of Shawn as the brave one between the two of them.*

"Don't let the kid snow you, Carlton. Watching a few episodes of Queer Eye for the Straight Guy doesn't make him Harvey Milk."

"Well he has got a big head-start on me in the whole dating men thing."

"If you believe that you're not the detective I thought you were." Henry looked at him with that police stare of his.

"Are you saying that Shawn hasn't dated other men?" *Oh God, Lassiter thought. Could I have gotten this whole thing completely wrong?*

"That's exactly what I'm saying."

"Are you sure?" Lassiter's mind was grasping at straws, *Maybe Henry just didn't know. Maybe Shawn hadn't said anything to him until recently.*

“Shawn has been throwing his behaviour in my face since highschool. Do you really think he wouldn't have told me if he'd been sleeping with guys? Trust me on this. You're it. Don't let it go to your head.”

“But we talked about it. Why would he say that if it wasn't true?” Even as he asked the question, he knew the answer. *Shawn lied about it because I didn't believe him when he told me the truth.* Lassiter felt like a complete asshole.

“Listen, “Henry said, “if there's one thing Shawn is an expert on, it's bullshitting. Whenever he doesn't feel in control he makes up some outrageous story. If this thing between you lasts you'll either learn to ignore it or see right through it.”

In another room of the hospital, Shawn was solving the case. He was sitting on the edge of the bed while a nurse took his blood pressure. O'Hara and Gus were listening attentively.

“I'm having a vision. I see St. Elmo's Fire...no, it's Rick Hansen. No, sorry, it's not a Man in Motion, it's a woman. A woman in a wheelchair.” In fact, it was the woman in the courtroom whose look had said she was trying to kill him, Scanners style. The woman whose amputated leg enabled her to get disability parking plates on her grey Ford Explorer.

The nurse wrote something on her clipboard and left the room. *She's probably reporting that I'm having hallucinations,* Shawn thought. *I'll be lucky if I get out of here without a visit to the psychologist.*

“She's only got one leg. She's driving the grey Ford Explorer that tried to run us off the road. She's one angry mother—”

“Shut your mouth!” Gus glared at him warningly. He had a rule about swearing in front of women, especially Juliet.

“No, seriously, Gus,” Shawn said, “She's somebody's mother.”

“Drimmer's mother only has one leg!” O'Hara jumped on the clue. “She had to have the other one amputated. And she was in court today. She could have followed you when you left.”

“I'm sensing she blames us for destroying her son's career and sending him to jail,” Shawn said. “Also, she may believe we cancelled Matlock.” Gus and Juliet looked at him sceptically. “Come on! Old people love Matlock.”

“I'll have McNab run a check on her.” O'Hara pulled out her cell phone and talked for a few minutes.

"Dude, you've got to help me convince them I'm good to go," Shawn said to Gus. "I've got to see Lassie and make sure he's okay."

"The doctor thinks you should stay in bed with rest, ice, compression and elevation. They call it RICE. Take your RICE, Shawn."

"I don't want any rice. It's just a sprain. I'm fine."

"Shawn, an ankle sprain can lead to damaged ligaments and tendons, or even osteoarthritis. You should stay here."

"But Juliet said he wants to see me!" Shawn pouted and looked at Gus with his saddest face.

"Do not make puppy dog eyes at me, Shawn," Gus warned. "It will not work this time."

O'Hara finished her phone call and rejoined them.

"Guess who drives a grey Ford Explorer with a disability plate?"

"Professor X? Barbara Gordon? Stephen Hawking? Are they real or fictional?"

"It's registered to Mrs. Joan Drimmer, Detective Drimmer's mother."

"That was my next guess." Shawn put a hand to his head and closed his eyes. "Wait! I see her stalking Lassie and me and taking pictures from her SUV. She's our mystery paparazzi!"

O'Hara looked at Shawn with amazement. "Yes. She's a retired photojournalist living in Santa Paula."

Shawn could have simply said he'd seen the plate. He could have even claimed to have seen Drimmer's mother at the wheel. But this was way more fun. Besides, the SUV would be damaged, and the techs could match the paint from it to the trace left on Lassiter's Crown Vic. The Chief would have her hard evidence. Plus, he was pretty sure that once they arrested her she'd be only too happy to tell her version of events to anyone who'd listen. She would probably include her photographic stakeouts, too. It was all part of her deluded fantasy about how he and Lassiter had framed her poor innocent boy. She probably still had the negatives of the pictures.

Shawn looked at Gus and O'Hara expectantly.

"So. Can one of you please help me hop out of here so I can see my boyfriend?"

Chapter 6

Lassiter left the doctor's office with a triumphant smile. He'd spent six aggravating weeks wearing a sling to stabilize his shoulder. His final check-up had revealed no permanent damage to the muscles. He had full mobility, and the doctor had cleared him for return to active duty. While his injury healed he'd been limited to working his desk. Although it was humiliating and annoying, it also gave him a lot of time to think.

His conversation in the hospital with Henry had changed how he viewed what was going on with Shawn. This was a first for both of them. Shawn was just adjusting to it easier than he was. *That should be no surprise*, Lassiter thought. *He's usually a few steps ahead of me on every case we work, too.*

Lassiter had also given some serious thought to his ambitions. His career had always taken precedence over his relationships. He'd tried to explain to Victoria that the long hours, missed dinners, and forgotten anniversaries were just part of the job. But the truth was that he'd chosen to put work first, again and again. It was part of The Plan that would culminate in becoming Chief. In the end, that was why Victoria had left—she'd just gotten tired of always taking a back seat to The Plan. Lucinda's departure had just been a taste of his own medicine. *Sick mother, my ass!*

However progressive California might seem to the rest of the country, being open about dating Shawn would pretty much torpedo The Plan. The mayor had canned Raymond Sauter because the guy had been caught having an affair. *Or to be fair*, Lassiter thought, *it might have been the fact that the affair was spread all over the front page of the newspaper that bothered the Mayor most. Vick had a lot of support at City Hall. She didn't seem the type to cash in her chips for early retirement. She'd have kids to put through college. By the time she reached mandatory retirement age Lassiter wouldn't be that far behind her. Was it really worth sacrificing his personal life for a job title he might never have—might never even have a chance of having?* Lassiter realized that while he still wanted to be Chief, he no longer wanted it at the cost of everything else. This new insight slowly led him to another deduction. He was in love with Shawn Spencer. It was the only logical reason he didn't feel particularly upset about letting go of the dream of following in Chief Fenich's footsteps.

His first week back to work he'd framed the surveillance photo of him and Shawn at Judy's café and put it on his desk. Coming out announcements weren't his style, but he'd given O'Hara the okay to discuss it if people asked. *I give it a week before everyone knows*, he figured. He'd even called Russell Santos and collected on that fifty-dollar bet. Eric had insisted that he bring Shawn to their place for dinner. He'd promised to get back to them.

Shawn had been playing Florence Nightingale since the collision, helping him shower, cooking dinner, and driving him to and from work. While they watched television Shawn had gently massaged his muscles and helped him do the exercises the doctor had

recommended. Initially he had been overwhelmed by embarrassment at being so reliant upon another person. Gradually, he realized that Shawn's consideration and attentiveness told him something very important. Shawn actually cared. It wasn't just about the badge, or the gun (although the gun was still pretty sexy) or the power that being head detective gave him. Maybe Shawn would still love him if he raised meercats—whatever those were.

Over the past two weeks Lassiter had demanded more time to himself. He claimed that he wanted to readjust to doing things on his own, and that he felt guilty about monopolizing Shawn's time. Shawn had agreed, noting that he did need some quality time with Gus, but Lassiter could tell that his Spidey-sense had been on high alert. *Well*, Lassiter thought, *Shawn would find out tonight what all that alone time had been about.*

Lassiter left work early and went home. He pulled the covers off the bed, dimmed the lights, and put some Sinatra on the stereo. He poured himself a scotch on ice and sat waiting for Shawn to arrive. He felt as nervous as he had on their first date. They'd continued to have sex despite Lassiter's injury, but it had been a softer, gentler, more tentative sex. While great in its own way, Lassiter had had his fill of being treated like a delicate flower. Now that he had the green light on his arm, he wanted to cut loose. And tonight was the night. He was finally ready to show Shawn how he felt in the only way he hadn't thus far.

The sound of a key in the lock pulled him from his reverie and he went to the door.

"Lassie!" Shawn said. "The sling's off, I see."

Lassiter pulled him inside, pinned him against the wall with the length of his body and began to suck and bite his neck, overwhelmed by the desire to mark him as his own. Shawn gasped and arched against him. Lassiter ground his erection against Shawn's hip, feeling Shawn stiffen against his thigh.

"So I guess this means it's good news about your arm?" Shawn whispered hoarsely into Lassiter's neck.

"What do you think?" He crushed his mouth against Spencer's soft lips and invaded him with his tongue. He dragged his lips across to Shawn's bristly cheek and down to his shoulder, gently biting the muscles of his neck as he went.

"So, no operation then?" Shawn asked.

"Nope."

"That's too bad. I was hoping we could have a comparison of scars, Lethal Weapon-style."

"They stole that from Jaws." Even with his mounting excitement, Lassiter couldn't help

getting pulled into Shawn's weird pop culture tangents.

"But it wasn't nearly as sexy in Jaws."

Enough talk, Lassiter thought, *more sex*.

Lassiter grabbed Shawn by the wrist and shoulder and flipped him around, pressed him against the wall and leaned hard against him from behind.

"I think you're going to give me a fetish for walls if you keep this up," Shawn said.

"Would that be such a bad thing?" Lassiter mumbled.

"It might be if these low gloss walls absorb stains like I think they would. You'd never get your damage deposit back."

Taking Shawn in a basic arm hold, Lassiter pushed him into the bedroom. He threw him onto the mattress, already stripped bare of blankets.

"Get naked, Spencer."

"Oooh. Yes Sir!" Shawn quickly kicked off his sneakers and socks and sloughed the t-shirt, jeans and underwear. He hurried forward to help Lassiter with the buttons of his dress shirt but he pushed him forcefully back onto the bed.

"I got it, thanks." Lassiter slowly removed his clothes, watching Shawn as he lay naked, writing with lust and impatience. Once naked, Lassiter climbed on top of Shawn and allowed his hands to wander over his body drinking in every aspect of it. *Shawn did have some interesting scars*, Lassiter noted. *Maybe they should do a show and tell sometime*.

Shawn rolled on top of him and worked his way down his body, kissing, licking and sucking, leaving a trail of hickeys across his hip bone. Lassiter didn't mind; he liked having reminders of their encounters on his skin. Shawn licked the underside of Lassiter's cock and enveloped him in his mouth. He groaned at the heat, the moist pressure and the amazing dexterity of Shawn's tongue. The pleasure was mounting quickly, spreading out into the rest of his body. If this continued the evening could come to a quick and explosive end right here. But that wasn't his plan. He placed an open palm on Shawn's forehead and firmly pushed him back and off his straining hard-on.

"Was I doing it wrong?" Shawn asked breathlessly.

"You were doing it perfectly," he said. "Too much so. Get up here. I want your mouth back."

Shawn moved up the bed and Lassiter held him firmly to his chest as they kissed. Lassiter pulled back and met Shawn's gaze. His pupils were enormously dilated, the irises only a

halo of dazzling blue.

"I want you, Shawn." Lassiter couldn't remember having been this aroused before.

"I'm all yours, Lassie."

"I meant that sexually. Let's do it." He licked his lips nervously. "Let's go all the way."

"Oh Lassie, you Sly Fox."

Oh well, Lassiter thought, I walked right into that.

"I mean it, Shawn. I've been doing some reading." He leaned over and pulled a book from a drawer of his nightstand and handed it to Shawn.

"Anal Pleasure and Health," Shawn read. "This is easily one of the *least* sexiest titles I've ever heard."

"I've looked at a lot of websites, too. I bookmarked some in case you want to refer to them."

"I think I've got the basic mechanics worked out for myself," Shawn said. "Although can I just say, the idea of you looking at gay porn online is incredibly hot."

"It was research."

"Sure it was." Shawn grinned.

"I've been giving it a lot of thought," Lassiter said, "and I think it only fair that I should go first. I believe they call it bottoming."

"Really?" Shawn looked surprised. "Cause I just assumed you'd be McGarrett and I'd be Danno in this scenario."

"I wouldn't expect my officers to go into a situation I wouldn't go into myself. Why would this be any different?"

"Please tell me you're not expecting me to sleep with McNab or Dobson?"

"Don't even think about it." Lassiter continued, "I've got condoms and lube and I've been practicing with some toys I bought."

Shawn laughed. "What, no poppers or leather sling?"

Lassiter pulled a bottle of Astroglide and a package of condoms out of the dresser. Buying condoms had stopped being embarrassing once he was out of his teens, but

buying condoms and lube at the same time was a whole different ballgame. That said 'anal sex.' He'd bought the condoms at a nearby drugstore but had gone across town to an adult store for the lube and toys. He'd paid in cash. It had taken all his self-control not to wear a false moustache or a prosthetic nose.

"Be serious a minute, Shawn. Is this something you want to do? Or are you only interested in it the other way around?" It hadn't occurred to him until that moment that Shawn might be a bottom. The websites he'd read suggested that expectations of that kind were mostly a myth.

"Not at all. No, I'm interested in all of it." Shawn grinned at him, but there was anxiety behind his eyes.

"Are you sure?" Lassiter asked. He'd been preparing for this evening for weeks, but it wasn't going ahead unless they were both certain they wanted it.

"I'm sure—if you're sure," Shawn reached up and touched his face, running his hand across the five-o'clock shadow of his jaw.

It suddenly occurred to Lassiter that Shawn wasn't reluctant to have sex with him. He was reluctant to hurt him.

"Don't worry," Lassiter said. "I trust you."

Shawn applied a generous amount of lube to his hands and rubbed them together to warm it. He gently ran his slick hand over Lassiter's cock, giving it a few strokes, then slid the hand over his tightened balls and down to his ass. Lassiter spread his legs slightly to give him better access. Shawn slowly inserted a finger and waited for him to adjust to the new sensation.

"How are you doing?" he asked anxiously.

"Fine." Lassiter had been practicing in private with the butt plug he'd bought, so Shawn's finger wasn't a challenge physically. What he hadn't prepared for was how intimate the experience felt. He couldn't imagine feeling closer to Shawn than he did that that moment.

"Are you ready for two?" Shawn asked.

Lassiter nodded. Shawn slowly added a second digit and grazed them lightly over the prostate. With his free hand he grasped Lassiter's cock and began to jerk him off. The combination was intense. It took all of Lassiter's willpower not to let the sensations overtake him and come from this alone.

"How about we go for three?" Shawn asked.

"We can skip three. I'm ready now." *And by ready I mean I can't stop thinking about having you inside me and we have to do this right now.*

"Are you sure? We have all night. There's no need to rush this."

"So help me Shawn, if you don't fuck me soon I will handcuff you to this bed and have my way with you." *Using the cop voice is more dignified than begging for it, Lassiter thought, but I'll beg for it if I have to.*

"How about we save that scenario for later so I have something to look forward to?" Shawn laughed.

He grabbed one of the condoms off the bedspread and fumbled, trying to open it one-handed. Lassiter intervened and opened the package.

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it."

Shawn rolled the condom onto his cock and brought his hips forward, leaning over Lassiter. He pressed his erection against his fingers, entering as he removed his hand. Lassiter breathed deeply and relaxed as much as possible, bearing down onto Shawn's cock, which now felt enormous. He gasped sharply as Shawn buried his entire length inside, part in pleasure and part in surprise at the sudden sense of fullness. Shawn, concerned, started to pull back but Lassiter wrapped his legs around Shawn's hips, locking him in place.

"Relax, Spencer. We're good." *Good didn't even begin to describe it.*

"Are you sure, Lassie?" Shawn's voice was husky and breathless. He closed his eyes and licked his lips. Lassiter could tell he was enjoying himself, but was touched that his concern overrode his pleasure.

Lassiter dug his fingers into Shawn's hair, pulled him forward and kissed him hard, trying to pour all of the feelings he was having into the embrace.

"Trust me, I'm sure."

"I'm not going to move until you say so," Shawn assured him.

"Go ahead and move." *And by that I mean fuck me hard, right now.*

Shawn slowly began to thrust, pumping Lassiter's erection in his lube-slick hand as he did so.

"Lassie, you feel incredible," Shawn whispered. He tilted his hips and grazed over

Lassiter's prostate. Lassiter groaned and his hands clenched the sheet above his head. His breathing became ragged and heavy and he could feel the orgasm building like a wave in his balls. *This wasn't going to last long.*

"Harder?" Lassiter asked, his tone almost pleading.

Shawn began harder faster strokes in tandem with the movements of his hand on Lassiter's cock. The sensations were more intense than anything Lassiter had felt before. It was like having sex from the inside out. He cried hoarsely as he came into Shawn's fist. His muscle spasms pushed Shawn over the edge and he clung to Lassiter's hips as he thrust forward. Exhausted and soaked in sweat, Shawn fell on top of him. Lassiter could feel Shawn's heart beat pounding against his chest.

"Oh God Lassie," Shawn gasped, "I just...wow!" He rolled onto the bed and lay gasping beside him. Lassiter's eyes were leaking, but he didn't feel sad. *This was the extreme opposite of sad.*

Once he could move again Shawn sat up, removed the condom and threw it into the garbage can. He leaned in and kissed Lassiter long and softly.

Shawn pulled back and looked into Lassiter's blue eyes. "I vote we take a break, order a pizza, watch some CSI and then do this again but with you on top this time."

Lassiter looked at Shawn, feeling giddy and light-headed. Thank God he didn't have to work in the morning.

"Sounds good. What do you want on your pizza?" *Other than the obvious pineapple?*