



Goddamn that Mountie. He's gonna get us both killed. But more important, he's gonna get himself killed. And I seem to be the only one around to stop him. Didn't I ask him once if we were bullet-proof? If we wore capes? No, and no. We're not and we don't.

But, nooo. He's gotta try to stop every little crime— forgetting that lots of times, they have guns and he has nothing. If I hadn't been there—

But I was. Thank God. Stupid little punk, I knocked his butt to the floor. Wanted to smash his smug little face in, but Fraser — the idiot — stopped me. Guy practically gets shot in the head by the punk, and he doesn't want me to whale on the shooter. Go figure.

So, another minor crime thwarted. Fraser, you couldn't just tell the clerk to hand over the cash, could you? Couldn't just let the kid with the gun walk out with the dough. You big dope. This is what we constantly tell small business owners: don't fight, hand over the cash, save your life. But not Fraser, no.

Now that I know he's going to live, I almost wanna kill him myself. But not until after I get his clothes, bring them to the hospital, pick him up, and take him home.

* * *

I'm clutching the clothes I brought Fraser with a death grip while talking to the doctor and trying to look normal. A med tech wheels a wheelchair up to us and then leaves.

"Is he gonna be okay?" "He's lost some blood — head wounds generally lose more blood than comparable wounds elsewhere on the body, because of the concentration of blood vessels."

"But he's gonna be okay, right, Doc?"

"Yes. The bullet only grazed his skull. He's a very lucky man, Detective." He looks at me like it's my fault. Or maybe I'm imagining it. Hesitates. Then he says, "It might be a good idea to urge your, uh, unofficial partner not to risk his life this way. Considering he carries no weapon and has no legal jurisdiction here — which he took great pains to explain to me."

"I already do, Doc, I already do. Doesn't do any good. He's like Dudley Do-right...only this isn't Canada, ya know?"

"Here's a prescription for him. Ibuprofen. 800 milligram tablets. No more than two, every 4-6 hours or as needed." He tears it off his 'scrip pad and hands it to me.

"Gotcha." I take it from him.

"See that he stays off his feet for a few days. No work, just rest. There's a possibility of concussion, so someone should wake him up every couple of hours for the next 24 hours."

"With pleasure," I reply grimly.

The resident looks at his watch, nods at me, shakes my hand — then he's off.

I pull the curtain aside and look in on Fraser. He's layin' on the gurney, looking at me like he was expecting me. He's paler than he's ever been. And he's pretty damn pale to begin with. He's got that kind of womanish coloring of some real white, white chicks — ultra pale, dark-dark hair, red lips. And that's *without* makeup. He

could be Dracula, if he wasn't Dudley Do-right. Or a male version of Snow White.

"Frase."

"Hello, Ray," he says, trying to be cheery.

But he looks tired. They bandaged the scrape, burn, whatever-you-call-it from the bullet. Along one temple, going back past his ear. Had to shave around it first, though.

"Fraser, don't start with the nothing-happened-everything's-fine crap," I warn him.

"But, Ray—"

"No 'but's about it, Frase. You almost *died*. Didn't you hear the doctor? Goddamnit, you were lucky, just *lucky* the bullet grazed you instead of going right through your thick head!"

I am so relieved to see him look so normal, except for the bandage, that I almost wanna cry.

He was covered with blood. I knew a shot had been fired, but I didn't know who'd been hit, or what had happened. Then I realized it was Fraser. But how bad, you couldn't tell, for all the blood. He was talking and moving, but that means nothing. I've seen people do that after they been stabbed twenty times. Right before they fall down dead.

"Ray, I assure you—"

"You don't assure me of *anything*, Fraser, except that yer gonna get yourself killed and maybe me too. And while I don't much care what happens to me, I'm not letting anything happen to you. Which means *you* aren't letting anything happen to you on my watch, or I will kill you myself."

He opens his mouth to protest again, thinks better of it, shuts his mouth.

"Understood, Ray," he says, sheepish, looking down.

"C'mon. You're coming home with me."

"Ray, I can—"

"Just shut up, Fraser. Here. I brought your clothes." I drop them in his lap, trying not to look too close at his perfect, creamy thighs under that short hospital gown. His calves are tempting enough. He even has

nice feet. That figures. He'd have to be perfect from head to toe...he's Fraser.

He looks through them while I pass a hand through my hair, looking away.

"You didn't bring me any underwear," he says, like a pouty kid.

Oh, right. He's Mr. Clean. Wouldn't go commando like I do sometimes when I feel like it — or when I haven't done laundry in a long time. Like, um, now, come to think of it.

"Well, Frase, I'm sorry," I say, getting testy. "I didn't want to leave in the first place. So I rushed over to the consulate, grabbed stuff you'd need, and rushed back."

"And I appreciate that. But..."

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Fraser! So you got no underwear. I'll go back to the consulate and get you some, *after* I get you home. But let's just get home, okay?"

"All right," he says. But he still sounds pouty. He looks through the clothes some more. "And no undershirt," he adds, all serious.

I roll my eyes. No underwear, no undershirt. Okay, aside from the fact that I've wanted to jump his bones for the longest time, and I know he'll never feel that way about me — you can see what's different about us right there. I forget the underwear and undershirt — like, who needs 'em? For what? I mean, you shake it off good, you don't get any wet spots. Undershirt. Why? It's not like it's the dead of winter. But he's gotta have 'em.

"Whatever, Frase. I'll get you what you want when we get home. Okay? Can we get a move on?" I glare at him. But really I'm just scared, relieved, pissed. And dying inside because I almost lost him and he's the only good thing in my life. And he doesn't even know it, cuz I can't tell him, cuz he's not that way.

"Am I...supposed to change here?" he asks, looking around nervously. Oh, right. He's Mr. Modesty, too, and there's too many gaps in the curtain around his gurney. Fine, whatever.

"There's a bathroom down the hall, if you wanna change there, Frase."

"I'd prefer it," he says, a little embarrassed.

"I'll wheel you into the bathroom and you can put some clothes on."

"Thank you, Ray," he says, sounding glad I understood what he was getting embarrassed about. He's got this ultra-modest thing happening, holding the hospital gown shut in the back while he gets off the gurney and sits in the wheelchair.

I drop the clothes I brought him from the consulate in his lap after he sits in the wheelchair. I pull the curtain wide and wheel him away from the gurney, down the hall until we find the men's room.

"Here," I say, and back into the door, so I can open it with my body and wheel him backwards into the john.

Once inside, I lean back against the door. "I'll guard the door," I tell him. But then I realize he's kinda weak. Having trouble getting outta the chair to put his jeans on. Freaking *ironed* jeans. What a freak.

"You need some help, Fraser?"

"No, Ray, that's all right," he says, pushing up from the chair. But it moves.

"Ah, crap. Here. Let me put the brakes on this thing." I forgot about that. I leave the door and get behind his chair and step on the brake thing. "There."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome." I go back to stand by the door, but pay attention. He's pretty pale, like I said. Tired. But I can just tell from the way he's acting, he's not gonna stay put in my apartment.

"You all right, there, Frase?" I ask, but I'm looking up at the ceiling when he starts stepping into his pants. He's modest and I just don't wanna see what I can't have anyway. Not that I wouldn't love to see his perfect naked ass — I would. But I'm real strict with myself, real strict. I won't take advantage of anything like that for a cheap thrill. I've had the chance before and didn't take it. I can get my cheap thrills in my mind, anyway. Besides, the fantasy is

always gonna be better than reality...cuz it's never going to happen in real life, and I know it.

"Yes," he says. The ceiling is looking mighty fine, but I look down to see if it's okay to keep my eyes front and center again. He's buttoning his red and black flannel shirt. His ironed jeans look good on him. Ironed. What a freak. I'm in love with a freaky man who irons his jeans. And he'll never know it.

He sits down in the wheelchair and looks up at me. "Ready," he says. I go behind the chair, take off the brake and kick the handicapped access button on the wall to make the door open.

* * *

It's funny. He doesn't really need my arm, I don't think, while we're coming up the stairs in my apartment, but he leans on me anyway. For a second I get a flash of what we might be like when we're old men and we don't care what people think anymore. Well, he must still be pretty beat. I'm exhausted, and I'm not even the one who got shot at. He lets go of me when we get to my door. I get my keys out and let us in.

"Now, you know where everything is. Lay down here on the couch; I hafta change the sheets on my bed first, but I'll do that after I come back from the consulate with your precious underwear and undershirts. And I gotta drop your 'scrip off and get it filled."

"Ray, you don't have to give me your bed."

"Shut up, Frase. I am giving you my bed and you're gonna stay in it. Now just siddown here on the couch."

He hesitates. "All right," he says, meek again.

"You okay?"

"Yes, Ray, I'm fine."

"You need anything? Painkiller? Soup? Something to eat?"

"No, they gave me a local anaesthetic."

"It's gonna wear off."

"That's all right."

"No, it's not, but we got no time to argue 'bout that now. You're gonna swallow some painkillers later, if I have to force 'em down your throat. None of this 'high tolerance for pain' bullshit, Frase. Come on. You were seriously injured."

That seems to make an impact on him.

"You're right."

There are bags under his eyes I never noticed before. Blue. Almost as blue as his eyes, jeez. Snap out of it, Kowalski. Get a grip. He's injured. All you gotta do is keep him quiet for the next twenty-four hours. Make sure he does nothing but rest.

"All right, just stay there. I'll go back to the consulate, get you some more pants, shirts, and your underwear and undershirts. Don't do anything, Fraser. Just sit there and rest. Sleep or something. Or watch TV. 'Kay?"

"Yes, Ray," he says meekly again. But something about it is too meek...and I got no time to check why.

* * *

I come back in the door with some bread, a bunch of his clothes stuffed in a duffel bag Turnbull gave me, the prescription, a dozen eggs, and a gallon of orange juice. I never have food in the house; I always order out. So I figured, okay, fluids, Vitamin C, breakfast foods — this should help.

He's doing my dishes.

"Hi, Ray," he says, bright but weary.

"What the hell are you doing?" I demand.

"I'm doing your dishes," he says, then looks guilty. "Well, there were so many of them..."

"Siddown for Christ's sake, Fraser! God! You're not my maid. Okay? You are *injured*. I'm supposed to take *care* of you, not take advantage of you. Which I'm not, since you did this of your own stupid free will, you freak."

"But I'm almost done, Ray," he protests. "Sit down!" I bellow. "Before I make you!"

"All right, all right," he pouts, backing down. He sets his jaw. Yer not gonna make this easy, are you, Frase?

"Here's your stuff. Okay? I am going to change the sheets now. You are going to stay here and you are *not* going to put your hands back in that dishwasher. And Fraser," I point out as I walk outta the kitchen, "there is a dishwasher. You didn't need to do 'em by hand."

"But they get much cleaner that way," he calls after me, as I walk down the hall to my room.

* * *

Finally got him to drink some orange juice and have some canned soup. We watched the weather channel for tomorrow's forecast. Now Fraser looks about as sleepy as I feel. I get up and take our dishes off the coffee table to put them in the dishwasher in the kitchen.

"Okay, Fraser, how 'bout we get some shuteye?" I call back to him. "I have to wake you up every two hours, unfortunately. But we just gotta make sure, y'know, that you don't have a concussion."

"Right..." he trails off. "I guess I will turn in."

"Okay." I walk over to the couch.

"Yes?" he asks, looking up at me.

"Well, I'm sleeping here," I say. "I can't sleep here if you don't move and go in the bedroom."

"Oh, terribly sorry," he says, and blushes. He gets up.

I siddown on the couch and kick my shoes off. He turns around and looks at me, and I look up at him, wondering what's on his mind.

"Ray, you needn't sleep on the couch," he says slowly.

That about spins my head around. "Huh?"

"I hate to turn you out of your bed. And the couch is surely not good for your back." He fidgets. "We're...we're both adults. It's a, ah, large bed. We could both sleep in it."

Some kinda terror must show on my face, cuz his face gets pink and then closes up somehow.

"Never mind," he sighs. "I'll take the bed, you take the couch..." and starts walking down the hall.

I think about it. The alarm clock is in there, and I'd have to reset not just the alarm but the current time, too, if I unplug it and bring it out here.

"Y'know, Frase," I hear myself saying. Like I don't even have control over my own voice.

"Yes?" He turns and stops, looking at me over his shoulder.

"Well, the alarm clock is in there," I say slowly. "And yer right, we're both adults. I mean, nothing to worry about. Silly. So what if we're two guys, right?"

He smiles a little smile. "Right."

Something about the way he's acting...it's like he *wants* me to sleep with him. Well, he's probably afraid he'll have nightmares. Today wasn't exactly a good day for him. It was downright traumatic. I tell myself to stop getting ideas and stop getting hard. Nothing's gonna happen, cuz Fraser is not that way. He just doesn't want to be alone while he sleeps. Which I can understand.

"Be right there," I tell him, standing up from the couch. He continues on into the room.

After a little pit stop, we're both in my room. He's already in his underwear and tee-shirt and oh-so-fine looking, I can't stand it. And, of course, single white male bonehead that I am, I am about to take my freaking clothes off with no undershirt, no underwear, and half-a-hard-on.

Usually I sleep in shorts. But I gotta get naked before I can put 'em on. It seems silly to go into the bathroom to change — it is my bedroom, after all. This is a locker room type of situation. We're just changing

clothes together...in theory. So the bathroom is right out. That would just call attention to the fact that...never mind.

I turn my back to him and sit down on the edge of the bed. I strip off my shirt. Onto the floor with it. I stand up, my skinny ass turned to the bed, and strip off my pants. Only a quarter-of-a-hard-on now. Good. I slip on my shorts fast. I peel back the covers without looking at Frase and slip into bed.

"Lights out?" I ask him, once my head's on my pillow. He has the other one.

"Fine," he replies.

I turn off the lamp on the little table next to my bed.

I'm in bed with Fraser. In *my* bed. And now I'm gonna be in here all night with Frase. I'm never gonna get any sleep. Why'd I do this? Dumb, Kowalski. Not smart. Dumb.

It's ten PM. I set the alarm clock on the table by the lamp for midnight.

* * *

The shrieking alarm makes me realize I actually did fall asleep. I'm in a total fog, though. Two hours. Not enough.

"Frase?"

"Yes, Ray," he replies, sounding tired and irritated.

"Okay, just waking you up. You want anything? Glass of water?"

"No, Ray, I'm fine," he says. But he doesn't sound fine.

I sit up. "What's wrong, Frase?"

"Wrong? Nothing's wrong. I'm fine."

I can't help it. I reach over and feel his forehead...even just to touch him that much is so great. It's hot.

"Frase, you feel like you're burning up. I better get you a couple of them ibuprofens. Two of 'em."

"No, Ray, that's all right," he says, polite but firm. Uh-huh. He's always polite.

"No, Frase, you're taking 'em. I don't care if it's against your religion or whatever — you're hot, you're body's trying to fix itself, it needs help. I'm getting you two of

them, and you are taking them." My voice gets stern and gruff.

I get up and get the prescription from the kitchen counter where I left it, and get him a glass of water. I bring 'em both back to the bedroom to Fraser.

"Here you go," I say, standing next to the bed on his side. He sits up in bed and takes the pills. He looks at them and then at me.

"You know what to do, Fraser. C'mon. Just tonight, okay? You don't have to be Superman," I tell him.

"I'm not Superman," he says, looking up at me with this half-doubtful, half-hopeful weird look on his face. But the way he says it...it's like he didn't finish what he was saying.

"Well, then, quit acting like him," I tell him. He puts two pills in his mouth, drinks the water. Hands me back the glass. I take it back to the kitchen.

When I get back into bed, he's rolled onto his side. It feels like we're both gonna lie here awake now.

* * *

The alarm goes off again. Two AM. This time he doesn't wake up. I musta hit the snooze pretty damn fast.

"Fraser. Frase." No response.

Now I panic. I sit up, lean over, roll him over onto his back and start yelling. "Fraser!"

His eyes pop open, scared. "Ray! What! What is it!"

Oh, man. Thank God.

"You...I called you. You didn't answer. I thought something was wrong," I blurt.

"No, I guess...I was just very sleepy. I'm all right. I'm awake now. Sorry."

Whew. "No, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you. It's just, I, I got scared myself when you didn't reply," I tell him.

He'll never know exactly why. But he gives me a funny look. Sweet, kind of sad, kind of...something else, too. But I don't know what.

"I understand," he says quietly.

I turn and flop back down on my side, looking away from him.

"This is your punishment," I say, without thinking. "This is what you get for risking your life when you didn't have to, and almost getting yourself killed. You get to wake up every two hours for the next twenty-four hours."

"Ray," he says, kinda sharp. And I just keep talking, like he didn't say anything.

" 'Course, who knows why I'm being punished. Maybe I'm being punished for being dumb enough to partner up with someone who doesn't care if he gets himself killed, maybe doesn't care if he gets his partner killed—"

"Ray, that's not entirely fair," he says, quietly.

"Well, Frase, you sure as hell don't care how *I'd feel* if you got killed, do you?" I say, before I stop myself.

He doesn't say anything for a real long time. And me, I'm trying to think what I can say to take back the mean and depressing tone of what I just said. But I can't think of anything, and then finally he breaks the silence.

"Ray."

"Yeah, Frase," I reply, already closing my eyes. What am I trying to do, make him feel guilty? Yeah, I guess I am. I better just shut up.

"Uh..." he stops, and then clears his throat. "Nothing," he says, like he changed his mind.

"See you at four o'clock, Frase," I say, after another short silence.

"Yes, Ray," he replies, quiet too.

* * *

The alarm goes off. I slap the snooze button.

"Frase."

"Yes, Ray."

I don't say nothing for a few. Dunno what to think. This is getting weird but...kind of weird in a nice way. Feels like a

sleepover or something. 'Cept I've got a hard-on now.

"So, you all right? Your head hurt?"

"It's fine, Ray."

"Okay. G'night again, Frase."

"Good night."

* * *

He's laying there on the floor, and I rush to him. I thought he was wearing his Serge jacket. But when I get to him I realize he's only in the Henley. It's bright red with his blood.

"Fraser! Fraser!"

His voice is a death rattle. "Ray..."

I grab him, pull him into my lap. "Don't go, Frase, don't go. You can't go. Please don't go...I never got to tell you..."

"Goodbye, Ray," he whispers, and blood trickles out of his mouth.

I kiss it quick, and say his name. No response. "Fraser!" I kiss his mouth again, the salty, meaty taste of his blood on my lips. "Fraser! No! No! Don't go! I love you!"

"Ray! Ray!"

I'm being shaken and I open my eyes and Fraser is leaning over me, shaking me by the shoulders. And he's not in his Henley, or on the floor, or bleeding like a stuck pig, or dead. Bad dream.

"Fraser. I'm ...I'm all right," I whisper, looking up at him.

"You were yelling and thrashing, Ray."

"I was having a bad dream, Frase," I say, trying to shrug his hands off. Did I say anything understandable? Stella used to talk in her sleep, but nothing you could really understand. Did he hear me say...I loved him?

"You were saying my name, Ray."

Oh, shit. "I...I was dreaming about you. You getting yourself killed." There. Hope that makes him feel bad.

"I'm sorry."

"You're sorry...then don't do this shit again! Damn it!" I feel the heat behind my eyes.

"I'm sorry. I ...I guess I just didn't think about how it might affect others who care about me."

"And you think *I* don't think before I do stuff," I mutter.

He won't let go of my shoulders. Please, please, let go. Before I get hard, thinking of the way I wish this was going, and isn't. He's close enough to kiss and it's killing me. And my mouth was just on his, even if it was only in a dream. But I wish I could erase that dream kiss of a dying or dead Fraser with a real life kiss of living, breathing Fraser. And I still wanna kill him, now more than ever. Everything's all mixed up.

"I'm sorry, Ray," he says. He seems so serious in the dark blue light from the street lights outside my window. The blinds aren't completely closed.

"You better be," I say back, sounding like a sullen kid. But he *should* be sorry.

"I'm not used to thinking there is anyone who cares so much for me," he says slowly.

Oh, God. Don't. Don't spill the beans. Keep yer mouth shut, Kowalski. God, Frase, please let go of me.

"Well, now you know," I say, short. "So don't do it again."

"Understood," he sighs. He lets go my shoulders and moves back to his side of the bed, and lays back down.

Then the alarm goes off. I slap the snooze button so violently that the clock falls off the bedside table.

"Ray?"

"What," I snap.

"Nothing...never mind," he says, that meek and quiet voice back again.

I wanna growl but I don't. I just pick the damn shitty alarm clock up and reset the alarm for another two hours. I slam it back on the table and roll on my side away from him. And slip my hand down and squeeze my cock half-heartedly. It's halfway hard. Fraser. Holding me. By the shoulders. Above me...

Wish I could get up and go beat off in the bathroom, but, I better not.

It's 4 AM but I feel like I've hardly slept.

* * *

Alarm goes off, seems like five minutes later. I wake up with my back to Frase, and my hand on my cock.

"Fraser?"

"Yes, Ray."

"Okay, just checking."

"Must we keep doing this?"

It's killing me, really it is — I feel even more like a zombie now than I did before — but I'm not stopping.

"Yes, we must," I tell him.

"All right."

I reset the alarm. And then I can't stand it. I get up and go to the bathroom. Fraser. Fraser. He's all I can think about as I'm jerking off in the bathroom. No time for a long elaborate fantasy. I just wanna come and get this outta my system so I can go back to bed and sleep like a baby for two more hours. So I stop being so snappy and bitchy.

In my mind, I'm on my knees sucking him off and he's moaning and shaking and he comes in my mouth. And then I'm flat on my back on my bed and he's sucking me off, and I'm really getting into it, watching my cock go in and out of his mouth and — oh, oh, oh, ahhh...I spurt into a wad of toilet paper but not before I get some on my stroking hand. Shhhh, quiet, no moaning out loud. I wipe it off on the toilet paper, throw it in the toilet and flush.

Finally. Whew. Okay. I wipe the sweat off my forehead, tuck myself back into my shorts. Open the door, flip the light off, and head back to my bedroom.

My cell phone's on my dresser. I call the precinct, tell Dispatch I'm not coming in, that Welsh knew I might not be coming in, and that I don't wanna call Frannie cuz she'll freak about Fraser and I just can't deal

with that right now. Welsh can tell her and deal with her freakout.

Slide back into bed.

"Ray?" he asks.

"Yeah, Frase," I say, feeling guilty. He can't know I jacked off, but...if he knew I was thinking about him that way, he'd freak for sure.

"Are you all right?" he says, slowly. Weirdly slow.

"I'm fine, Fraser. Fine," I lie. Well, it's not really a lie...now I am pretty much fine.

"All right," he says. But he doesn't sound convinced.

I hit the pillow and practically immediately, I'm in dreamland. Cuz the next thing I know is, the alarm goes off, it's 8 AM

"Frase?"

"Yes, Ray," he says, sounding tired and irritated.

"Your head okay?"

"It's fine."

"Hurt?"

"No." He's lying, but I'll make him take some more ibuprofen when I'm feeding him some breakfast. I slide outta bed and go into the kitchen.

* * *

He got up when I went in the kitchen to make coffee and look around for what to fix to eat. But now he's dozing on the couch. He looks so damn gorgeous, even with his hair messed up — maybe *because* his hair is messed up. His perfect body is under that tight white sleeve-less shirt that hides nothing, and those baggy boxers that hide *everything*. I go over to the couch. The magazines on the coffee table have all been organized into neat stacks. Damn Mountie.

"Frase. Wake up. Come in the kitchen here and sit down." I lean over him. He opens his eyes, looks at me, sits up. Follows me back into the kitchen. I pour him a glass of orange juice and hand him two more pills.

"Drink this and take these," I tell him, making every word hard. I watch him until he does. He's not happy about it but he isn't fighting me about it, which is good.

I get out a pan and a cereal bowl. I break two eggs into the bowl, add some milk, whip 'em with a fork. This is about the only thing I can cook — I remember when Mom taught me when I was in sixth grade. I put some butter in the pan and turn the gas on under it. I pour the eggs in on top of the butter when it's all melted.

Less than ten minutes later, Fraser is drinking a glass of milk, eating my scrambled eggs, and I'm handing him the buttered toast I just made him. I get some ancient jam outta my fridge, open it, look inside. It looks okay. I sniff it. Smells okay. I bring it to the kitchen table and drink my second cup of coffee.

"Aren't you eating?" he asks me.

"No."

"Aren't you hungry?"

"You know I never eat breakfast, Frase. Not 'til I get to the precinct."

"But..." he looks at the clock. "You'd be there by now, if you had gone to work today."

"I know, I know. I'll have some toast," I say. But I don't get up. Sometimes coffee makes me sleepy, I dunno why. Today is one of those days. Or maybe it's just the stress of no sleep and what happened last night.

"Now you're over-tired. I'm sorry, Ray," he says, and puts a hand on my forearm.

It's warm and dry and how I wish that hand could go other places on my body.

"It's okay, Frase. I just wanna make sure you're okay," I say. I try not to look at him and, pull outta his grasp.

He looks at me, a little strangely. Then he picks up his fork again and keeps eating 'til the eggs are gone. He eats most of the toast, drinks the milk.

"I am positively over-filled," he says when he puts down his glass.

"Good. You're going back to bed, or you're gonna sit quiet on the couch."

"I'd rather sit on the couch."

"Great. You sit there and watch some TV. I'm going back to bed. I'll set the alarm for two hours."

"You don't have to. I'm up for the day, now."

"Just in case. You might snooze on the couch, and I'd never know cuz I'd be in dreamland, Frase. I'm setting the alarm."

"Fine," he says, watching me get up and leave the room. I feel his eyes on me down the hall 'til I get into my bedroom. As much as I wish he was in bed with me, I can finally get some sleep. It was too nerve-wracking having him there.

* * *

The alarm goes off. I wake up, take a couple minutes to *really* wake up, and then get outta bed. Then I come down the hall.

My living room is completely clean. Neat and tidy. All the magazines are in the magazine rack, the CDs on the stereo have all been picked up and put away (all in the proper jewel boxes, too, I'm sure). There's no dust on anything. And he's sitting on my couch, watching a PBS cooking show.

I'm ready to kill him. I stomp the rest of the way into the room. I can't prevent him from doing stuff that will get him killed or at least injured. And now I can't get him to rest and recuperate like he's supposed to. I can't win!

"What about this don't you understand, Frase?" I demand. "You're injured. You almost *died*. You're supposed to be resting, taking it easy — not cleaning my apartment. What is wrong with you! You're injured! Stop working!"

He looks up at me, doesn't even bat an eye. "I'm fine, Ray."

"I don't care if you are fine. Some stuff don't show up 'til hours, maybe days later! You're not supposed to be doing any of this today! Not for twenty-four hours at *least*. Why can't you get it through your thick head! This Superman thing has got to stop!"

"Ray, I—"

I stomp over to the couch. "Get up! You're getting in bed if I have to fucking drag you there myself!"

"I don't see why you're getting so—

"Just do it, Goddamnit!"

He grabs a magazine from the rack. "I won't sleep, Ray, I can tell you that. I'll read instead."

"I don't care! Get in that room!"

"Ray—"

I shove him ahead of me down the hall. He doesn't stop me, though I get a shocked look over his shoulder. I march him over to the bed and sit him down.

"Get in it," I growl.

"Ray, I'm—"

"Get *in* it!"

"Ray, I think you're being quite unreasonable," he says stubbornly, looking up at me.

"I'm unreasonable! This from the man who almost gets a bullet through the brain from some sixteen year old gangbanger with a .25! Because he, gun-less, tried to stop a kid with a gun point-blank on him! I'm unreasonable! Lay down!" I shove him down onto the bed.

He looks up at me, shocked.

"Just lay there! Don't move!"

I turn to the dresser. My eyes feel hot. I'm seeing red. It's like I just found out all over again, that he was okay and was gonna make it: I wanna kill him myself now. My back to him, I grab my handcuffs and unlock them. I go back over to the bed, my hand behind my back with the cuffs. He's laying there on his back, the magazine on his chest unopened.

"Ray, I—"

"Fraser, look," I say, and sit on the edge of the bed. "It's my job, my duty, my responsibility to make sure you rest and take it easy. You're my partner, even though you don't *act* like it most of the time. And I know you got no one else to do it. I can't stop you trying to get yourself killed, but I can at least do this! But you won't let me! Every freakin' time I turn my back, you do

something else that is work! You're gonna stop it, from now on."

And I bring out the cuffs. Lickety-split, I yank one of his wrists over his head, and cuff it to the bed frame. He just looks at me, dumbfounded. Aha! Never thought I'd see that look on *his* face. But there it is.

"Ray, you've handcuffed me to your bed."

The way he says it makes my face feel hot, so I jump up from the bed.

"You gave me no choice, Fraser!

I've done everything I could to make you stop working, cleaning, to make you be quiet and take it easy. You been fighting me about it since we got here, in your sneaky way! So now, you can't fight me about it anymore, and you can't do nothing but lay in that bed! And you're gonna stay there, for ten more hours. You got that?"

"I..." he gulps and swallows. "Yes, Ray."

I hesitate. Something about his attitude makes me suspicious. But I let it pass.

"Good. Now. I'm taking the alarm clock to the living room. And I will set it for another two hours. And I will wake your ass up when it goes off — or at least come in here to make sure you're awake. Got it?"

"Yes, Ray."

Too easy, but...whatever. I yank the cord from the clock outta the wall socket and stomp off to the living room. Set the clock on top of the TV, plug it into the surge protector the TV's plugged into. Reset the clock from the clock on the microwave.

Lay down on the couch. Put on ESPN. Fall asleep.

* * *

The alarm's going off and I have to get off the couch to go see if Fraser's awake. I go in my room. Seems like he's snoring away. His normally perfect hair is a little messed up, sticking up here and there.

Wrist over his head, cuffed to the bed frame.

I'm totally fucking hard within seconds.



Shit. Stop it, just *stop* it.

I go over to the bed, lean over him a little. Check his wrist, make sure his circulation's not being cut off. And I look down at him. Too late! His eyes are open. He grabs me by the shirt and jerks me down on top of him.

"Ray," he says grimly. He was faking being asleep!

"Frase, look—" We're face to face. Inches from each other. If only this was happening different!

"Stanley Raymond Kowalski, you have completely violated professional ethics by handcuffing me to your bed frame." He twists his grip on my T-shirt, tightening the collar around my neck. He looks as mad as I've ever seen him. He is one unhappy camper. I suppose I can't blame him.

"Frase, if you were in a hospital, they woulda restrained you too, the way you were acting!"

"That may be, but I am not in a hospital. I was released. I am in your apartment. I don't think Lieutenant Welsh would approve — nor would the Office of Professional Standards."

Oh, yeah. He's pissed. And it's dawning on me that this wasn't a real brilliant move. But he pushed me too far!

"Welsh knows you, so he wouldn't blame me one damn bit," I say defensively, trying to push out of his grasp. "And half the time, the Chief ignores OPS—"

He tightens his grip on my shirt more and holds his arm firmly in place. Jeez, he's strong. I try to peel his fingers off the handful of my shirt that he's holding.

And then it happens. While I'm struggling to get his hand pried off my shirt: My hard cock rubs against both of us.

It's right on his thigh. When he yanked me down, I was leaning over him. So one of my legs is over the edge of the bed, foot on the floor. But the other leg is...between his legs.

I can feel the blood drain outta my face. His eyes shift down, then snap right up to mine again.

It's like all I can see, all I've ever seen, is his eyes, so big and up-close. They're the dark blue of the lake on a windy summer day with clear skies. Or of summer twilight when the stars come out before the sun goes all the way down. He looks very surprised. His eyes seem huge, and not just cuz they're so close.

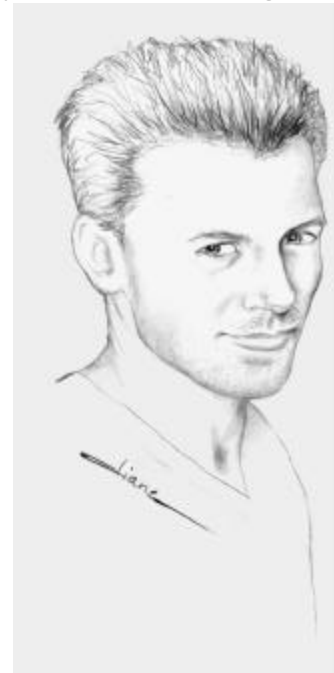
"Ray—" he whispers.

"Frase — I'm, I'm sorry, I—" I try to push out of his grasp again, panicking. "Let me go!"

"Ray—"

"Please, Frase, let me go. I'm sorry! I'll unlock you! I'll leave you alone! Just let me go!" I'm practically begging. I go back to trying to pry his hands off.

I try to keep my cock off him, try to keep my pelvis up, but it's impossible. Because when I take my hands off the mattress to try to pry his fingers off my shirt, all my weight is resting on the foot that barely remains on the floor, on the knee between his knees, and on...my pelvis. My cock seems to be everywhere. I can't move it anywhere where it's not in contact with his body. There's no escaping the friction.



And it feels so good...but it feels so bad at the same time. I didn't want it to happen like this! He'll hate me now. And he'll think

I did the whole handcuff thing on purpose, for sex reasons — And that's not why! He just pushed me too far. He kept doing everything I told him — and the ER doctor told him — not to do! He's such a stubborn bastard!

"Oh, Ray," he says, and his voice softens, and I look up at his eyes again, and they look so, so, I dunno, *big* and suddenly understanding— And I realize, there's something hard under my hip-bone, that wasn't there before, and, and —

It's him. Now *he's* hard.

Fraser's hard. With me and my hard-on on top of him, pressed against him...he got hard.

And his hand, the hand I can't get off my shirt, the fingers that won't peel back from their handful of T-shirt — that hand starts pulling me close. I feel his breath on my upper lip.

"Ray—"

"Fraser, don't—" I barely have time to say, before he makes my mouth meet his.

Ohmygod. He's kissing me. Tentative...soft...and then stronger.

I completely lose it.

I'm not trying to get his hands off my shirt now. Now I'm grabbing hold of him and I hike my ass a little so I can thrust my hard cock against him and feel his hard cock under my hip. He yanks me by my shirt, so that both my feet are off the floor and I'm resting all my weight on him. And then he lets go of my shirt and his hand moves over my shoulder, behind my head, locking our mouths together.

Ohmygod.

He kisses so sweet. Like, when they used to say *soul kiss*, I think this is what they meant. But hungry. Hungry like he's starved. Or is that me? Doesn't matter, I guess, cuz we're both kissing, wet and hot. And I'm thrusting my hard cock against him, in my jeans, and his hard cock in his boxers is thrusting up at me—

I can't believe this is happening. But then he moves his hand from the back of my head and puts it on my shoulder. Feels

around my arm and slips it under my arm to my back. Strokes my back. Strokes down my back to my ass...strokes my butt. And this is with only one hand free. Ohmygod...

I'm gonna come in my pants if we don't stop. I pull back to breathe.

"Ray..." he whispers, opening his eyes. I'm terrified to look him in the eye — and terrified not to.

"This is why you wanted to sleep on the couch," he says quietly.

I nod. I can't even speak. His eyes are so clear and blue, really blue, not like mine — mine change with my clothes, the weather...

"This is why you were so uncomfortable in the bed," he adds, almost whispering, no judgment, just stating facts.

I nod again. What else can I do?

"This is why you went in the bathroom and masturbated," he whispers.

"How do you—" I protest, feeling the flush hit my face.

"The smell of semen," he answers, before I finish my question. "And your moaning in the bathroom."

I must turn fifty shades of red and purple. "But I tried to be quiet, and I came into some toilet paper, I didn't—"

"Ray. Olfactory nerves directly affect the sense of taste. And you know my sense of taste is extraordinarily acute."

"I—"

"It's all right," he whispers, and pulls me down for another kiss.

He's under me, he's hot, I'm hot, we're both hard, and we're both thrusting against each other.

"I'm— I'll unlock you—"

"Ray—"

"I'm sorry, Frase. It was wrong. I shouldn't've—"

"Ray. *I'm* sorry," he says. Hesitates. "For taking such a risk in the convenience store. I see now..." he looks down, guilty, then looks back up. "I see why you were so upset," he whispers.

I dunno what to say. But I nod. "Yeah," I say, after a few seconds.

He slides his hand off my butt with a slow stroke and then his hand is at his side, and he's just laying under me, waiting. I never expected in a million years I'd get this lucky.

I pick myself up, slowly. First things first: off comes my T-shirt. Then I scoot off to the side, swing my feet over, and strip my jeans quick. I'm still wearing my shorts, though. I'm not too sure about this still...

I turn and look at him. And he's just laying there, watching me, quiet, smiling a little. Pale, perfect, smooth and muscular arms and legs. His body partly covered by his undershirt and boxers.

I lean down and dig in my pants for the keys. I crawl over to him on the bed and lay beside him. On the side with his arm up over his head. I reach up over his head and unlock the handcuffs from the bed and his wrist. I turn away for a second, to drop the cuffs and keys on my pants on the floor.

Then I turn back and look at him. And I wrap my arms and legs around him.

"Hey," I whisper.

"Hi, Ray," he whispers back.

I kiss him, then, hard and rough and he likes it and kisses me back. His hips are thrusting up and he strokes my arm that I have wrapped across his chest. I'm humping his hip with my cock, and I could do this all freaking day and never come and it would be great.

I stroke my hand down his chest from his neck to his navel. Slip my hand under the undershirt. Stroke his chest, skin to skin. I can't help it: I hike the shirt up to his armpits and start kissing his chest. I kiss over to each nipple and suck them lightly. They get hard. Tiny little hard nubs. He arches under me. I go back to kissing his mouth and slide my hand all over his chest and stomach. He reaches over his head and I back off. He peels off his shirt. Just watching his chest and stomach ripple when he does it... God.

Then I lick up his lats. For some reason, maybe cuz being with Fraser makes me

think more, I remember the right name for this muscle. From a weight-lifting PE section in senior gym class in high school. Not that it ever did my skinny ass any good. Latissimus dorsi.

I can't believe I remember that. I lick up his lats again, almost to his armpit. He shivers.

"Like that?" I whisper.

"It tickles. But, yes. I like it..." He smiles that small, pleased smile he gets sometimes.

"This'll tickle more," I tell him, and lick up his lat all the way into his armpit. Salty. Tangy. Musky. Fraser.

He squirms and bucks his hips up against the leg I have thrown over his thighs.

I sit up and grab the blankets which were kicked down to the end of the bed. My dick is aching, hard, and leaking. But I just wanna lay next to him and be completely amazed that this is happening. I *am* amazed. I could lay here with him all night, and if he never put a hand on me, it would still be heaven.

"Here," I say, pulling them up over us, moving up beside him again, and kissing him lightly.

He kisses me back, hard. I feel the tip of his tongue and let it into my mouth. With both arms free now, he squeezes me to him hard. I wrap my legs around him again and hug him to me in a full-body hug.

"Fraser, Fraser, Fraser," I whisper when we break the kiss and I put my head down on his shoulder. And I feel guilty, then. For cuffing him.

"Ray," he whispers. He sounds sleepy.

"Yeah?" I answer.

He quick rolls me over and lays on top of me and kisses me until I hardly have any breath left.

"Now..." he says, drawing back with a slight smile. "You're at my mercy."

"Fraser...I've wanted this for so long. You have no idea," I choke out. Still can't believe this is happening. "Being at your mercy is, like, more than I coulda ever hoped for."

"You should have told me," he whispers, looking at me serious.

"I wanted to, but...I just figured it was hopeless."

He sighs and puts his head down, pressing our foreheads together.

"I'm sorry, Ray. I wish I'd known. I've been...you've been so much on my mind...this way. For quite some time." He sighs. "But I'm afraid I'm not the most forthright person in the world."

"It's okay. Now we know. It's just...the best," I say, but by the end of it I'm whispering. It's still like it's a secret.

"Yes. It is very good, isn't it?" he says, pulling back and smiling. Looking at me, looking into my eyes.

And then he closes his eyes and I know what's coming next — I think — and I close my eyes and that mouth, that red mouth is on mine. And I'm captured. Just as sure as if I was handcuffed to the bed myself.

And he crushes me in a big hug that feels *so* good. I try to hug him back but he's got me crushed good, and I can't even squirm my arms out of his hug.

So I let him crush me to him. It's where I belong, anyway...where I've wanted to be for so long, and thought would be impossible, would never happen.

"Fraser?"

"Yes, Ray?"

"I can almost forgive you for doing what you did at the convenience store holdup." I shut my eyes. Can't look at him.

"Why do you say 'almost'?"

"Because, I can't totally forgive that. And you better not do it again, or I really will kill you. But...this woulda never happened if you hadn't done what you did, and wound up getting shot at, and wound up needing someone to take care of you for a day after getting almost shot in the head. And even if this never happened I'm glad I'm that someone for you. You have no idea, Frase. *So* glad." That's it, I reached my quota. There are no more thoughts in my brain to organize except *this is so good, this is so great, Fraser's here, Fraser's in my bed,*

Fraser's half naked in bed with me, I love him, maybe he loves me too...

"You're right, Ray. None of this would have happened if I hadn't done such a thoughtless thing. But...I'm kind of glad I did because...I too am glad this happened. I can almost forgive you for handcuffing me to your bed."

"I didn't do it for this, Frase. I swear. You just got me so mad—"

"I know, Ray—"

"Cuz you wouldn't listen—"

"I know, Ray. I believe you. I didn't get the sense that you handcuffed me for *this*. Besides, if you had, you would no doubt have tried to take advantage of me while I was restrained. But you didn't. You just went into the living room to sleep."

Oh. Okay. He understands.

"Yeah. I just...it was so hard sleeping with you, Frase. So hard but so...nice. Even though nothing happened and I didn't expect anything would."

"It was very nice, wasn't it?" he whispers.

I open one eye to look at his face but it's peaceful and his eyes are shut. So I just let him lay half on me. And listen to his breathing, feeling happier than I have since I don't know when.

"Thanks for taking care of me, Ray."

"You're welcome."

"Even though I'm fine and didn't need you to look after me." I hear the smile in his voice.

"You just keep telling yourself that, Fraser," I whisper. "I'll look after you anyway. Just don't do any more really stupid things like you did with that kid. Okay?"

He breathes in deep, without speaking. Then exhales a long breath.

"Okay, Ray," he finally whispers back.

"Good," I whisper in response.

"Well, I'll try." Ah. Waffling. Classic Fraser move.

"Trying is good. Trying is better than nothing," I tell him.

And now I really am exhausted. But it's a good kind of tired. Tired, glad, warm. And lucky. And not alone anymore. And neither is he.

****End****

