

Mark may be in charge at the office, but at home he's... POWERLESS.

When Mark orders his boyfriend-and-employee David to get coffee, David is offended. He's the Chief Technology Officer for their company, not some lowly secretary! But he's ready to make Mark understand what it means to lose control of a situation. It's time for one of their games...

This SPICY 5,000 word story contains BDSM elements, a male/male couple, and lots of sex! If you like gags, restraints, and sensory deprivation, you'll love this story!

Powerless

Stella Notecor

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POWERLESS

By Stella Notecor

David marched out of the conference room and allowed the door to slam shut. To think he was being sent to retrieve coffee, as if he were a lowly secretary. Mark was meeting with the CEO of a small company they hoped to acquire, and when the CEO complained he was thirsty, he sent David to find something to drink. Considering David set up the meeting, being kicked out was humiliating.

David straightened and turned towards the mess hall. He would retrieve the coffee, but he would not be made to feel powerless.

He'd show Mark how it felt to lose control of a situation.

~*~

Mark sighed and slid his key into the door lock. He opened the door and stepped inside his apartment, flicking on the lights. Oddly, the room remained dark.

He wiggled the switch up and down. Nothing. The bulb must have burned out. He headed towards the dim glow of his computer on the other side of the room. The door closed behind him, pitching the room into darkness.

Halfway to the computer, someone grabbed Mark around the waist and covered his mouth with one hand. The person pulled him against his body, and Mark could tell his captor was taller and stronger than him. He froze. The man held him closer. He was naked—his half-hard cock pressed against Mark's ass.

His assailant pressed a squishy object into his hand. "That is your safe object," he whispered, his stubble tickling Mark's ear. He leaned back into his captor, recognizing the man's voice as David's.

"Drop the ball, and I stop immediately." His safe object was a boob-shaped stress ball his brother gave him as a joke after he came out to his family. According to his brother, every man needed a pair of boobs to relax with. Personally, he preferred squeezing a different pair of balls when he was stressed.

"If you understand, nod your head twice." Mark complied. David's hands fell away, leaving him standing alone in the middle of the room.

A moment later, cloth brushed against his cheek. The glow of the computer disappeared as it covered his eyes. Before Mark could ask why David had decided to play, a part of the mask was pulled under his chin and tightened so he could not open his mouth.

"Are you able to breathe?"

Mark nodded. The mask didn't cover his nose.

"Good." Hands fell to Mark's shoulders. "Undress yourself." David's voice moved away. "I'm turning on the lights."

The chain of the lamp by his bedroom door jangled. Mark couldn't tell if the lights came on or not; the mask kept him in the dark. He strained to hear David's movements as he struggled to take off his clothes with only one free hand.

Mark stripped off his jacket and shirt, dropping them to the floor. A thumping sound came from the corner near his desk.

He kicked off his shoes and socks. The cushions of the couch made a strange "whumpf" as David took a seat.

Mark unbuttoned his slacks and pushed them down to the ground along with his underwear. He bent slowly, allowing David a prime view of his ass from the couch. He straightened up, taking a moment to caress his growing hardness before placing his hands at his side.

He expected to be reprimanded for touching himself without permission, perhaps even spanked. Instead, he heard nothing—no reprimand, no movement.

Just silence.

Mark stood in place for a long time, waiting to see what would happen next. Time stood as still as he did. Finally, growing impatient, Mark made to turn towards the couch.

David's voice came from near the bedroom door—at least ten feet to the left of the couch. "Do not move."

Mark froze. He clenched his safe object. David had been sitting on the couch. Mark heard him take a seat, but he never heard him get up.

What was David doing? Why was he making Mark stand still? Thoughts flickered through his mind. The earlier sounds had come from more than one part of the room. Had David invited someone else into the game?

No. They never told anyone about their games, let alone invited them to join in.

Mark was Chief Executive Officer of an international technology company. David was his Chief Technology Officer. The only people they associated with daily were other employees. They couldn't bring any of them into the game, not without dealing with sexual harassment charges. The only employee even near their level was the Chief Financial Officer, and he was the type to be interested in the things David and Mark did.

At least... Mark didn't think he would be interested...

Mark's hand spasmed, squeezing the boob-ball tighter. David was in charge during the games. He made the decisions, and if he had decided to bring someone into the game tonight, there would be a good reason for it. Mark closed his eyes beneath the blindfold and forced his muscles to relax. He trusted David.

He focused his hearing. He thought could hear David breathing, but it might have just been the rush of blood through his head. Actually, his head felt a little fuzzy. Mark breathed in deeply, but his head remained strangely empty. He felt like he was going to pass out. He continued breathing deeply, and he bent his knees and relaxed his grip on his safe object slightly. Dizziness, quickly followed by a flush rising in his cheeks told him that the increased circulation had sent blood rushing to his head. At least he wasn't dizzy anymore.

Sweat trickled down his back and legs, tickling as it moved. The room seemed warmer than usual. Beads of sweat slid down his forehead and were caught by the edge of the mask's blindfold before they could sting his eyes. After the sweat dried, it made Mark itch. He barely kept himself from scratching at the salt trails.

Mark's legs started to ache. He shifted his weight, trying to give each leg a break. His feet felt numb on the hardwood floor. The squishy boob in his hand grew heavy, pulling on his arm. His whole body felt thick and stiff.

After what felt like hours, David whispered in Mark's ear, "Good boy."

Mark tensed, a shudder crawling up his spine.

David placed a hand in the middle of his back and gave him a little push. "Head for the bed."

Moving forward obediently, Mark trusted David to steer him away from any obstacles. He brushed up against the doorframe to their bedroom, and it helped him orient himself. He sped up, more confident in his location. David's hand fell away as he outpaced him.

Then he rammed into a chair, crushing his penis painfully. “Nhhhh!” he whined through his nose as he clutched at his crotch.

“Naughty boy.” David’s hand landed on his shoulder. “You know better than to take control.”

He nodded and caressed his throbbing dick. It didn’t hurt half as much as his wounded pride, but it was easier to soothe the physical pain.

David turned him. “Slowly this time.”

Mark shuffled forward.

“Faster.” David swatted his hands. “And no touching.”

He released his dick but kept a firm grip on his boob-ball. Knowing that the furniture had been moved left him feeling lost. What else had been moved? The table? Their bed? He paid close attention to David’s hand on his shoulder, stopping when he squeezed lightly.

“That’s a good boy.” David’s hand drifted up to his hair. “That’s a very good boy.” He rubbed Mark’s head.

He leaned into the soft touch, tilting his head closer to David’s hand. The tension melted out of his shoulders.

He didn’t need to worry about where he was. David would take care of him.

David’s hand disappeared, snapping Mark out of his relaxed state. “Bend over.”

He bent forward at the waist and stood waiting. Rustling noises came from in front of him—it sounded like the restraints were being readied. The noises stopped, and he strained to hear something else.

David’s hand brushed against his backside. It was the only warning he got before he was promptly smacked on his right buttock. He fell forward and landed on the edge of the bed.

“One—for trying to take control.” David gave him another hard swat on the left side. “Two—for fondling yourself.” A third impact landed in the middle of his ass. “Three—for fondling yourself a second time.”

So David had noticed his misbehavior earlier. His ass burning, Mark wanted to regret it, but he couldn’t, not when it meant having David’s attention focused solely on him.

He rested his weight on his elbows, pulling his face out of the bedspread. Would he be smacked again?

The bed creaked and shifted. “Get up here.”

Mark nodded and scrambled up onto the bed. He knelt, hands resting at his sides, and waited.

In the silence that ensued, every noise seemed twice as loud as it should. David’s breath was harsh and heavy. The slightest movement by either of them made the bed squeak madly. The quiet of the room convinced him they were alone, as he heard nothing but their breathing and the bed. He relaxed a little, letting his muscles unwind.

Mark’s legs ached after a few minutes in the same position. He tried to shift subtly, but the bedsprings gave his movement away.

“Be still,” David snapped.

He froze in place. While gaining David’s attention was always good, displeasing him was a very bad idea. He had been forced to sleep on the couch often enough to know what the impatient tone in his voice meant. David never punished him without reason, but Mark hated having to be punished at all.

Forcing himself to remain still, Mark focused on what he could hear. His heartbeat pounded in his ears. David's breathing was a soft echo compared to the loud hiss of his own. Each breath he took made his heart race a little faster. His cock was still sore, but it was valiantly rising to the occasion again.

Whoosh! Mark twisted towards the noise and rush of air that accompanied the air conditioner kicking on. The sudden movement left him off balance, and he toppled onto his side.

David laughed. Mark cringed and curled into a ball. God, he was such a wimp. He squeezed his boob-ball. He should have expected the air to kick on—he'd noticed the heat of the apartment before.

David's laughter trailed off, but Mark contemplated releasing the boob. He didn't enjoy being humiliated.

A soft caress trailed down his exposed spine. "Sorry," David murmured. "I didn't mean to laugh." The bed creaked. A line of kisses traced the path his hand had taken. "It startled me too."

Uncurling himself, Mark waited as the kisses moved from his back to his arm. David mouthed apologies as he moved up his body until finally he pressed a gentle kiss on his forehead.

Humiliation was not part of their games. It never had been, and it never would be. Years of being taunted by school bullies had destroyed any chance of that. But David hadn't minded when Mark nixed that aspect of power-play.

Mark let David roll him over onto his stomach. He could touch the headboard with his fingertips, and as he shifted, his hand bumped into one of their restraints. He grabbed it, eager to get on with the game and move past his embarrassment.

"Are you sure?"

He nodded, and David shifted next to him, tugging the restraint from his grasp. The rip of Velcro echoed in the room. David slid the cuff around his wrist and tightened it. When he didn't continue to the other arm, Mark held up his boob-ball and squeezed it.

"Alright, alright."

David strapped him down, making sure his arms and legs were tightly secured. Then he climbed off the bed. Mark heard a creak he thought belonged to a chair.

Then David returned to the bed. "I bought you a present." Something brushed against his neck. "Drop your ball if it's too much." He slid something over Mark's head and covered his ears. Just like that, all the soft sounds he had been able to hear before disappeared. His world narrowed down to two senses: touch and smell.

His hearing gone, Mark had to interpret the movements of the bed to figure out what David was doing. The way the bed sunk and then rose suddenly made him think David had climbed off. When there was no movement after that, he decided that was exactly what happened.

Feeling lonely, he turned his head towards where David had been. As he moved, the soft satin of their best sheets rubbed against his stubble. He grinned. The sheets on the bed this morning had been a particularly rough cotton, certainly not something he wanted against his skin when all he could do was *feel*.

Mark took a deep breath, and his smile widened as far as the mask would let it. The stiff fabric bit into his cheeks, but he couldn't care less. There was a slight scent in the air that he knew didn't belong there. It was the scent of his favorite candle, a clean linen scent that reminded him of his mother. He breathed it in, savoring it. The smell was so light, he never would have noticed it without the mask and

earmuffs. The candle hadn't been lit—he couldn't smell any smoke—but it was nearby, probably on the nightstand.

He wriggled a little on the bed, tugging on his restraints. David hadn't told him he had to stay still. He sniffed at the sheets, taking in the scent of their meadow fresh laundry softener. His own musk nearly overpowered it, and he wrinkled his nose. He wouldn't have stopped at the gym after work, or he would have at least showered before he left, if he had known what David was planning.

Normally David gave him some sort of heads-up when they would be playing a game. Even when he didn't tell him, Mark could see it in his posture and the way he acted. At work, David listened attentively and did as he was told, the perfect employee. At home, he and Mark kept things on more equal grounds, sharing the chores and fighting over the remote like a typical vanilla couple.

During their games, David ruled.

Sometimes that total control leaked into their daily lives. The signs were indirect, unnoticeable if you didn't know to watch for them. David would be subtly dominant at work, nodding politely when given an order, then handing it off to some other unsuspecting employee. At home, he'd fix his gaze on Mark and demand a turn with the remote.

And Mark would acquiesce because he knew what that attitude meant. It meant he could give up control. It meant he could relax, knowing that all he had to worry about was whether David was pleased with him or not.

The subtle messages went both ways. When he was stressed, he'd start to take a step back in the boardroom, letting David do the speaking. Or instead of jockeying over whose turn it was to take out the trash, he'd haul it to the chute without being asked. Usually David would get the hint and he'd take care of him, giving him the break he needed.

Maybe that was the reason behind tonight's game. Things had been really difficult at the office with a big merger and the acquisition of a smaller company both happening within a month of each other. Mark had been stressed, but he didn't think he'd been sending out signals. David knew him better than he knew himself though, so maybe he had seen something in Mark that he hadn't.

The thought made his heart speed up. He'd been with so many guys who didn't get him, who expected him to always be as in-charge and powerful as he was in the boardroom. David got him in a way no other man ever had.

Mark pressed his cheek into the silky sheet. His evening stubble scraped across the fabric, sending shivers down his spine.

His dick took notice of the sensation. It had been hard for so long he had almost forgotten about it, lost in the dark silence of his thoughts. He remembered it now though, and he rocked his hips slightly, pushing it against the sheets. The satin didn't have enough friction, so while his movements felt good, they weren't enough. He rocked harder, grinding into the mattress.

Pain blossomed across his ass. He sucked in a breath. David had spanked him again, harder this time. Evidently moving wasn't allowed.

He let out his breath in a whoosh as something tickled his left foot. It felt like a feather duster was tracing his footprint, following the edge of his sole from his heel to his toes and back again. Then it slid down the middle of his foot.

Fuck, that tickled! He jerked his foot away from the feather duster. A hand came down on his ass. He froze.

The feather duster returned, this time on his right foot—the more sensitive one. He swallowed hard.

The duster moved from his toes, past his heel, then his ankle. It traced his calf muscle, making him shiver. His skin prickled with goose bumps as the feathers caught on his leg hair. It slid up the back of his thigh, barely caressing the bottom of his butt cheek, before sliding back down to his foot.

It lingered at his foot this time, swirling in circles at his arch. He held his muscles taut, trying hard to remain still, but his reflexes got the better of him. He twitched, his foot sliding away from the acute stimulation.

Ouch! He was smacked again, quick and hard, and before the pain even had time to fade, the feather duster was back.

He held himself rigid this time. He could stay still if he tried harder. The feathers swirled around the arch of his foot. They tickled so much it hurt, but Mark bit his tongue and held still. After a few minutes, the feathers moved on, and he nearly sighed in relief.

The duster travelled back up his leg to his backside and lingered there, tracing his buttocks and sliding down the crack of his ass to brush against his balls. The sensations were exquisite, but they weren't enough. He ached to move, to rut against the bed, but he held still, the threat of another spanking heavy in his mind.

At last, the feather duster was pulled away. Instead, David used his fingers to tickle Mark. He started with his feet, both of them at the same time. His short fingernails traced the edges of his feet. Mark shivered involuntarily.

David began to move upwards, drawing patterns on his calves. He lingered in the crease of his knees, then drew zigzag lines up and down his thighs. Each line got closer to Mark's ass. Finally, he slid one finger across his butt. Still far too gentle for Mark's preferences, the finger wiggled into his ass crack, then slid down until it stopped at his hole.

The other hand moved to his hip and urged him up. Mark struggled but managed to pull his legs towards his chest, propping his ass up in the air. The restraints on his arms were too tight to pull them into his body, so he was stuck with his face against the sheets.

The finger on his ass began to press harder. Mark pushed back, opening up for it to slip inside. Shit, he always forgot how much he loved the burn of being stretched open.

The hand on his hip disappeared, and a few moments later, cold lube dripped onto his ass. David's finger slipped out of him long enough to gather up some lube. Mark relaxed as much as he could, and his muscles easily loosened up enough for two of David's fingers to press inside.

Something changed then, and David sped up. His fingers brushed against Mark's prostate, and he moaned. Instead of spanking him, David did it again. Mark arched back into his touch, reveling in the intense pleasure.

A third finger joined in, spreading Mark wide, then a fourth.

The bed shifted and Mark imagined he could hear it squeaking. He pressed his face against the mattress and shoved his ass into the air. He was beyond ready. The fingers disappeared. David settled into place and eased his cock into him. Mark grasped at his arm restraints, holding them tight.

Then David pulled out and slammed back in. He set a harsh pace, hitting Mark's prostate every time. Mark whimpered under the assault, but he didn't move. David had control, and Mark was happy

to give it to him. His cock ached, but he didn't even try to reach for it. David gripped his hips and thrust faster, ramming deep inside of him. Shit, he would hurt tomorrow, but right now it felt like bliss.

David tugged on his hips, knocking him off balance. His knees slid across the satin, spreading him uncomfortably wide. His cock barely brushed against the sheets. It wasn't enough, and yet it was. He could feel his orgasm building up in his balls. Locked in the dark silence, all he could do was feel.

David thrust again and his knees slid even further apart. He could feel a burn in his muscles now. His hamstrings ached, and the only thing that kept him from falling flat onto the bed was David's harsh grip on his hips.

The pain battled with the pleasure he was feeling. He couldn't decide whether he wanted to scream or cry.

David released one hip and reached around him. He grasped his cock and tugged.

Mark exploded.

He screamed, though he couldn't hear it. He lost his balance completely and fell flat on the bed. David slid down along with him, the new position forcing him to shorten his thrusts.

His climax rocketed through him. Without his sight or hearing, every sensation was heightened. He could feel his screams rattling through his bones. His nerves tingled from the tips of his toes to his ears. Even his heart beat felt stronger and faster than normal. As his blood pulsed through his body, his cum leaked out of his cock, an afterthought in the aftermath of his explosion.

Each of David's thrusts bumped into his ass, scooting his whole body across the slippery sheet. He drifted, losing himself in David's rhythm until the steady thrusts stuttered to a stop. David collapsed onto him. Mark took a deep breath and pressed himself into his lover. He wanted to feel him inside and all over. David must have thought he wanted him to move; he rolled off Mark's back.

He began to remove the restraints. Mark lay still as they were removed from his wrists and then his ankles. He smiled when he felt David pull off the earmuffs. The mask came off next. He opened his eyes slowly. The room was brightly lit, and he had to blink until his eyes adjusted.

David sat next to him, a peculiar look on his face.

"Hi," Mark croaked. He cleared his throat. "Hi."

"Hey." David dropped something on the floor, probably the mask. "You okay?"

Mark held up his boob. Even in the midst of his orgasm, he'd held onto it. "I'm good."

He nodded. With one fingertip, he brushed a lock of Mark's hair from his face. "I don't get you."

"Hmm?"

"I tied you up, left you blind and mute, and you grinned about it."

Mark fought the urge to bury his face in the mattress once more. "Yep."

"I left you powerless. Didn't it make you angry?"

He shook his head. "I trust you."

David frowned, his forehead creasing. "It's not about trust."

"But it is." Mark rolled onto his side and propped his head up on his hand so he could see David's face better. "I know you won't abuse the power."

"And if I did?"

"You wouldn't."

David turned away. "I already did."

"How?"

His shoulders slumped. "I started a game angry. I know better than that, but I wanted you to understand."

Mark sat up completely. He scooted until he could sit on the edge of the bed. Setting aside his boob ball, he grabbed David's hand. "Understand?"

"I'm not a secretary," he mumbled.

"No, you're not," Mark agreed, though he wasn't sure where this was going.

David threw his free hand into the air. "I'm not a barista either!"

"Nope."

"Then why send me to get coffee?" He turned to Mark. "Why me? Am I so useless?"

Oh. That's what this was all about. "No, you're not useless." Mark pressed a kiss to his boyfriend's stubbly cheek. "I was just jealous."

"Of me?"

"Nope." He turned David's head toward him and kissed him hard on the lips. "Of all the attention you were giving to that CEO." The lecherous old man had spent the entire morning leering at David. "I sent you out because I didn't want to share you with his greedy eyes."

David pursed his lips. "You're lying."

"And why would I do that?" Mark shook his head. "You're much more valuable to me in a sales presentation than you are getting coffee. I just couldn't stand to have him looking at you." He groped his ass. "This is mine."

"Oh." He rubbed the bridge of his nose. "I'm sorry about—" he motioned to the mask on the floor "—all this."

"Hmm, don't be. It was perfect."

"I took my anger out on you."

"You still kept it safe and consensual. You gave me a safe object and you made sure I was okay when I floundered." Mark wagged a finger at him. "But if you're still feeling naughty, I'd be happy to spank you!"

David let out a laugh. "I don't think so."

Mark twined his fingers with David's. "Next time, we should talk *first*."

David sighed. "Yeah."

"But *afterwards*..." Mark handed him the boob ball. "Well, I like being powerless."

Liked This Story?
Try another of Stella Notecor's books!



Now Available!

Jason joins the Stanton and Associates private investigation firm on a whim. His rash decision soon leads to another—he bets his new partner Adam one hundred dollars that he can hide from him in between working on their assignments. After all, Adam might be the best psychic Jason has ever met, but Jason has a wildcard up his sleeve.

He can shape-shift—and he isn't confined to his own gender.

With that in mind, Jason plans to win the bet by seducing Adam as a woman. Only, Adam's actually pretty awesome. And the sex is totally mind blowing. And Jason might be falling in love...

This SPICY story contains gender-bending, male/female sex, and male/male sex!

Read on for a preview of the first two chapters of Stella's new novella [The Bet](#).

CHAPTER ONE

For a covert private investigator, Stanton's office was remarkably prominent. Jason crossed the lobby of the Lindsey building, noting the extravagant decorations. Gilded mirrors lined the walls and plush carpeting softened the floor beneath his feet. He entered the elevator and read the list of the building tenants, who ranged from plastic surgeons to divorce attorneys to loan sharks.

"Stanton and Associates" headed the list. It was the only office on the top floor—the penthouse suite.

Jason pressed the button for the thirty-second floor and watched the elevator doors slide shut. A tiny ding announced that the elevator had begun to rise. He stared at his reflection in the shiny silver doors for a moment, then made a face at his messy blond curls. He blinked and the man looking back at him had thick, gorgeous brown hair. The elevator dinged again, and Jason winked at his new reflection. "Looks like this is our stop, gorgeous."

The doors slid open to reveal a bustling office. Jason approached the secretary at the front desk. "Good afternoon. I'm here to see Christopher Stanton."

She blinked at him through the glasses propped on the end of her nose. "Name?"

"Jason Keith." He offered his best smile, hoping it would soften up the young blonde.

She typed something into her computer and then shook her head. "You don't have an appointment. Have a seat over there—" she waved a hand towards some chairs along the wall "—and I'll call you when he can see you."

Jason sighed and slunk over to one of the chairs. It depressed him when he couldn't impress someone in his most attractive morph.

He glanced at his watch. Quarter to one. In a typical office, everyone would be coming back from lunch soon. He'd make his move then.

Settling in with an outdated sports magazine from the meager selection offered, Jason kept an eye on the elevator. As soon as he heard a soft ding, he prepared himself. A group of five stepped off the elevator. Jason stood up and slid into place behind them. He shifted, morphing into an old man with wrinkled skin and gray hair. He followed the group past the secretary, who didn't give him a second glance.

As they turned a corner, Jason fell away from the group and shifted again, this time into a young man with black hair and darkly tanned skin. Walking purposefully, as if he knew where he was going and had a right to be there, Jason started exploring. Each door was labeled with a name plate or two, and while Jason didn't spot Stanton's, he did recognize one name.

Jason popped his head in the door of a small office. "Excuse me, are you Dr. Taylor Carter?"

Dr. Carter, also known as Jim's best friend Ray, glanced up from his work. "How can I help you?" He absently ran a hand through his brown hair, mussing it more than it already had been. From the deep wrinkles in Ray's forehead, Jason could tell he had been hard at work for a while.

Ray could definitely use a break, and Jason was well known for being good comic relief. "I was wondering if you could x-ray my head and tell me if my brain's broken."

Ray stared at him for a minute, then his brown eyes flashed silver behind his glasses. "Dammit, Jason! What are you doing here?"

Laughing, Jason stepped into the office and took a seat in front of Ray's desk. "I never could pull the wool over your eyes."

"No one else I know has a metal plate in their head."

Nothing could be hidden from Ray's x-ray eyes, and Jason could only alter the soft tissues of his body. Ray would always know who Jason was. There was no reason to be someone else around him.

Jason shifted back into his genetic body, feeling more comfortable in his own skin. A lock of light brown hair fell into his eyes as it grew, and he brushed it to the side.

Ray nodded. "Better, but you forgot the eyes."

Jason hadn't forgotten. When his eyes were properly hazel, he looked too much like his mother. He finished his shift with a sigh. "Happy?"

"Very. What are you doing here?"

Jason shrugged. "Nothing much. Just thought I'd come and visit you."

Ray smacked the papers he was holding down on his desk. "I never told you where I work. And how did you get by Christine?"

Jason hadn't realized Ray worked here until he saw the name on the door, but Ray didn't need to know that. "Christine?"

"The secretary at the front desk."

Jason smiled evilly and steepled his fingers. "I have my ways..." Ray stared at him silently until Jason squirmed in his seat. "I shifted and snuck in behind a group coming back from lunch."

Shaking his head, Ray sat back in his seat and crossed his arms. "Only you would sneak into a P.I.'s office. I'm surprised Christine let you by. Normally she sets anyone who tries that on fire."

That pretty blonde woman set people on fire? "What is this place? Stanton told me I'd fit in, but he didn't explain much."

"I knew the mystery would draw you in." Jason spun around to see Stanton standing in the doorway, his salt and pepper hair standing out in stark contrast to his midnight black suit.

He saluted the man. "Good afternoon, sir!"

Stanton chuckled. "Hello, Jason. Glad you decided to take me up on my offer." He motioned to the door. "Now, if you'll join me and leave Dr. Carter to work in peace, I'll explain what we do here."

"See you around, Ray." Jason stood and followed Stanton out of the office, snickering when Ray let out a huge sigh. As he walked, he changed his eyes back to blue. The small change made him feel anonymous, as if he had slipped on a pair of sunglasses to obscure his face.

Stanton led him through the office, passing by the secretary's desk. "Thank you for letting me know Mr. Keith had arrived, Christine. He gets into trouble if left alone too long."

Christine glared at Jason. "I can tell."

Jason shrugged at her and smiled. She huffed and turned back to her work.

Stanton patted Jason on the shoulder and led him onward. When they were out of earshot, Stanton murmured, "A word of advice if you decide to join us: stay on Christine's good side. I might be in charge of this operation, but she's the power behind the scenes. If she doesn't like you, you'll find yourself assigned to a lot of crappy cases." He paused in front of another office, a much larger one than Ray's, and pushed open the door. "This is my office."

Huge windows covered two walls in the corner office and showed off a large chunk of the New York skyline, which glittered under the summer sun. Jason whistled appreciatively. "Nice!"

“You'd think so, but the glare is terrible in the mornings. And all the sunlight breaks down my leather furniture.”

Stanton flopped into a large armchair in front of the desk and gestured for Jason to take the seat opposite him. He sat, and the supple leather molded comfortably around him.

Stanton fixed his gaze on Jason. “Judging by the nickname, you know about Carter's powers.”

Jason nodded. “He saved my ass one night after a bar fight when he told me I'd fractured my skull and took me to the hospital.”

“What else have you discovered about us?”

Jason leaned back in his chair. “Well, you're ostentatious.” He nodded towards the windows, and Stanton chuckled. “But I've got no idea what you actually do. You said you're private investigators, but you've got Ray and a secretary who sets people on fire. And you want me, a shapeshifter, to join you.” This meeting was leaving Jason with more questions than answers. When Stanton had saved Jason from getting his ass kicked in a bar fight, he had betrayed himself as an old friend of Jason's mother—a modern media heroine. Jason had been ready to write him off right then, but Stanton had said something intriguing.

Instead of wondering why Jason couldn't be more like his heroic mother, Stanton said his mother had saved fifteen people—but he knew Jason could save hundreds. That had caught his attention. After ruminating on it for a week, Jason decided to accept Stanton's invitation to join his group.

It didn't hurt that Jason had gotten fired from his bartending job after the fight and was down to his last fifty bucks.

“You shapeshift. Christine controls fire. Dr. Carter sees through solid objects.” Stanton paused for a moment. “I can influence people's thoughts.”

Suddenly, it connected. “You've got a team of paranormals.”

Stanton waved a hand towards the huge windows. “How many paranormals are there in New York? Tons, yet you never read stories in the newspaper about paranormal crimes. Someone has to clean up the streets, and normal cops don't even believe in us.”

Jason hadn't really thought about it before. He rarely spent time in the company of normals. The paranormal population was huge, especially in New York, and there was no reason to mix with normals if he didn't want to. “And you guys do it all.”

“Exactly. We work with local law enforcement, including the FBI and CIA, as parapolice—similar to the work paralegals do for lawyers and paramedics do for hospitals. Our budget is large; law enforcement agencies pay us for the investigations we solve, and we also take on private clients. My employees receive very comfortable salaries.” He folded his hands in his lap. “In return, they do anything I ask.”

Anything Stanton asked? It sounded a bit ominous, but Ray was willing to work for him. Jason took a deep breath. “Where do I sign up?”

“Are you sure? This job requires secrecy and dedication. You'll spend your nights on stakeouts instead of barhopping.”

Stakeouts sounded a heck of a lot more fun than getting smashed. “I'm in. When's payday?”

CHAPTER TWO

Tatiana stuck her head inside Adam's office. "Did you hear about Trina?"

Adam slumped in his chair. "I heard."

Trina was the fourth partner he'd lost in a year. Laura died after two months, though her heart attack was in no way his fault. Timothy ran off and eloped with his long-distance girlfriend after five months. Jackson lasted four months before he quit without telling anyone why.

Trina hadn't even made it a month before she had a mental breakdown.

Tatiana took a seat on the edge of Adam's desk and leaned over to pat him on the back. Her sympathy bled through her touch. "I'm sorry. You know it's not your fault, right?"

Adam did know. He could read his partners' minds, after all, and while none of them had loved him, they hadn't hated him either. Their emotions toward him were ones he typically engendered in people—that of casual regard for an acquaintance. With his abilities, it was easier to avoid people than to make friends.

He clasped his hands together and let them rest on his desk. "I am merely concerned that this will complicate my latest assignment." Undercover work was easier with a partner, but Adam could handle the case on his own if he had to.

Squeezing his shoulder once more, Tatiana grinned. "Oh, I don't think you'll have to worry about that. We've got fresh blood in the office."

Adam glared at the empty desk on the other side of the office. He had cleared away Trina's things as soon as he heard she was leaving. He had hoped he'd have the room to himself for a little while. "I always end up with the trainees."

"Because you're the only one who doesn't complain." She hopped off the desk. "Squeaky wheel and all that. Get ready; Stanton just opened his door and they're headed this way." She was halfway out the door when she paused and tilted her head as if listening to something. A smirk blossomed on her face. "This one's a real character!"

Adam felt like locking his door and pretending he was still at lunch. Avoiding his new partner wouldn't solve anything though, so he took a deep breath and rose from his seat. He stepped out of his office just as Stanton and a young man with incredibly messy blond hair rounded the corner. He nodded at them. "Good afternoon."

Stanton smiled in return. "Afternoon, Adam. Tatiana warn you we were coming?" Turning to the man at his side, Stanton murmured, "Tatiana is our resident gossip-monger."

"I heard that!" Tatiana's voice rang across the office, making the young man spin around to look for her.

Stanton just laughed. "I knew you would, and it's only the truth!" The trainee turned towards Stanton, a curious look on his face. "Tatiana can hear sounds as low as a mouse squeak from half a mile away. Naturally, the information she gathers gets disseminated rather quickly."

The man flashed a quick smile, one which didn't reach his dark blue eyes. "Naturally."

Stanton wrapped his arm around the trainee's shoulders. "Adam, this is Jason Keith, shapeshifter extraordinaire—" Jason smirked and suddenly he had dark chocolate skin and nappy black hair "—and your new partner."

Just as quickly as he had shifted before, Jason morphed back into his blond persona. He took a step forward, offering his hand. Adam took advantage and pressed his hand to Jason's. Under the guise of a handshake, he tried to read Jason's surface thoughts.

Jason's aura reverberated with self-assurance and curiosity. Adam couldn't seem to get a grip on Jason's thoughts though, and his touch made Adam feel... odd. He released Jason and tried to surreptitiously wipe his hand on his pants. Jason's glare made it obvious that he hadn't hidden the movement well.

"Now that you've been introduced, I'll leave you to orient Jason. He'll be working with you on the Orion assignment." Stanton gave them a jaunty wave and ambled away, leaving the two of them staring at each other.

Adam wasn't sure what to do with Jason. All of his previous partners had been Cognetics like him, though their powers had ranged from precognition to clairvoyance. How was he supposed to work with a Morpher?

Jason didn't seem to have any similar qualms. He pressed past Adam and into the office. The abrupt skin-to-skin contact made him itch.

"So, we share this office?" Jason strode over to Trina's now-empty desk and fell into the chair behind it. "It's kinda small, isn't it?"

Adam's hands tried to clench into fists, and he had to force himself to relax. "It suits our purposes." The two desks were small, but there was enough room to move around without bumping into each other. Adam entered the office, shutting the door behind him, and took his own seat. "Have you been briefed on our case?"

Jason nodded, and his appearance shifted. His muscles grew thick, and his skin darkened to a rich tan. His hair straightened and shrunk to a buzz cut, making him look like a stereotypical soldier. "I'm ready to kick some slave trader asses!"

Adam counted to five in his head before attempting to respond. "This is an extremely delicate assignment. If the Orion group discovers that we have located them, they will move before we can rescue the victims." The Orion group trafficked more paranormals than anyone else in New York. If they brought them down, they would undermine the city's entire trafficking network.

Jason's muscles deflated and his skin and hair returned to the bleached-blond look. "Jeeze. I was just making a joke."

"This is no joking matter." Adam took a calming breath. "Imagine the catastrophes that could occur if we went in to investigate and someone realized you were a shapeshifter."

Jason crossed his arms. "No one has ever figured out who I am unless I wanted them to."

Self-confidence rolled off of Jason in waves. He'd probably never faced a real challenge in his life. Adam wanted to shake him. He had seen people killed by the Orion Group. He had felt their lives draining out of their bodies, their emotions shifting to anger and pain as they died. He had met women who escaped from slave traders like the Orions. Being within twenty feet of them made Adam ill. The blatant despair embedded in their skin turned his stomach and made it impossible for him to breathe.

"You wouldn't be able to trick the psychics that the Orions employ for twenty minutes."

"Oh, really?" Jason raised an eyebrow.

"Indeed. I'm less skilled than they are, and you couldn't hide from me for more than a day."

A smirk spread across Jason's face. "Wanna bet on that?"

Adam didn't normally take bets, but he wanted to wipe away that smirk. "What are the restrictions?"

"Within a month, I'll spend a day—spread over twenty-four nonconsecutive hours—shifted in your presence without you realizing it."

Adam would uncover Jason within the first fifteen minutes. All it would take was a touch; Jason might be able to hide his thoughts, but he couldn't hide his aura. Adam had just one caveat. "You have to spend all twenty-four hours in the same morph."

Jason's smirk grew. "No problem. What do I get when I win?"

"When I win," Adam said, "I get one hundred dollars." And the satisfaction of crushing Jason's ego.

"One hundred dollars." He stuck out his hand. "You've got yourself a deal."

"You're on." Adam shook on it, the tingle of Jason's aura buzzing under his skin and assuring Adam of his eminent victory.

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About the Author

Stella Notecor believes that love has no boundaries and we cannot help who we love. This belief is reflected in her stories which involve homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, transsexual, etc. characters. She refuses to limit herself to writing one sexuality. Instead, she writes what the story requires, be it a straight, gay, or polyamorous relationship. Please visit her website at <http://www.stellanotecor.com/>.

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