

I tore my eyes away and looked at his face. He was smiling, and I smiled back. “I like how you look.”

“I like how you look too, David. Glasses and all.”

I loved how he said my name. “I have to wear these.”

“I wasn’t making fun of you. I really like how you look in those. You look smart and cute. Really cute, like Clark Kent. I’ve always had a thing for him.”

He’d just compared *me* to Clark Kent?

“You know who he is, right?”

“Of course I know who he is.” I was going to tell him about my comics collection, then remembered that a lot of people thought comics were for kids. I could tell him later, maybe.

“Good, although it would have been fun to tell you about him.”

It would have been fun to hear how he’d tell the story. Maybe I’d ask him later to humor me. “Superman is one of my favorite superheroes.” Damn, I’d used the present tense. Well, it wasn’t illegal to like superheroes, and he’d started it, anyway.

“Yeah, me too.” He got a dreamy look in his green eyes. “Wouldn’t it be great to fly?”

“Yeah.” I was finding it hard to breathe, with him giving me that look again like he wanted to throw me down and kiss me.

He blew out a breath and the look was gone. “Let’s get out of here, okay? I’m hungry.”

“Oh, sure.” I grabbed my bag with my books. I’d been here long enough.

“It’s about a ten-minute walk, but it’s worth it.”

“I like walking.” Especially with him beside me. Good thing we weren’t going where anyone would know me—no one would believe we were friends. He looked too good for that.

“That’s how you keep in good shape, right?” His eyes traveled up and down me. “I can tell that even with clothes on.”

I was blushing and glad we were out of the store.

“Thanks. I have a treadmill I work out on at home.” I had some weights too, but I didn’t want to sound like I was boasting.

He turned right as we left the building. “I go to a gym, or I try to. I get lazy. I like sleeping in and I like going home after work and collapsing on the couch with the TV on.” He grinned. “Maybe you could join too, and we could go together. That would be incentive for me.”

“Where’s your gym?” I liked his idea. I’d thought about a gym but always decided it would be a waste of money since I wouldn’t know anyone there and so I’d feel uncomfortable and not go after all. But if I joined Jamie’s gym, I’d know him. And I’d get to keep seeing him, even if after tonight he decided he just wanted to be friends, whatever tonight ended up being.

He gave me the address. “It’s near my place, and you can take the T there too.”

“It’s Boston—everything’s near the T.”

He laughed. “Thank god for that. So, what do you do for a living?”

“I’m an accountant.”

“So lots of adding and subtracting?”

“The computer does the worst of that.”

He laughed again. “I like your sense of humor.”

I smiled in reply. I liked numbers, liked making them work. Liked tax returns, even, but I wasn’t going to say that to Jamie yet. Maybe later, if he didn’t make fun of me for being one of those guys with the big glasses...actually, that was pretty much what I was. “What kind of pizza do you like?”

“My favorite’s hamburger and onion, but I’m pretty easy. Anything but anchovies.”

I couldn’t think of anything to say, with the lights from the store windows we walked by shining on his face and making him look even more like a Greek god.

“Wait, are anchovies your thing?”

He sounded a little worried, and I didn’t want that, so I made myself speak. “No, I can take them or leave

them. My favorite toppings are hamburger, bacon and onion, although not usually together.” I liked pineapple with bacon, but that might seem too weird to him.

He chuckled. “Yeah, that might be a strange combo. Have you ever thought about having bacon and pineapple? It’s different, I know, but it’s great at Tim’s, the place we’re going.”

Since it was his suggestion... “Sure. Let’s have that.” I thought about leaving it at that, but what kind of friend would I be if I did? “I’ve liked that combination before.”

He was beaming by the time I finished speaking. “That’s great. I had a feeling you’d like that combo.” He took my hand in his and squeezed. “Next you’ll tell me you like draft pitchers, not bottles.”

I laughed. “Good draft, yeah.”

“I’ll let you pick it out. Then you can’t blame me if you don’t like it, but I’ll get to blame you.”

He grinned at me, so I knew he was teasing, and we laughed together as we kept walking, still holding hands. I liked this. I liked how comfortable I felt with him and how fun it was to do something as simple as walk down a street with him. It had been years since I’d been this happy.

I hoped I could be what he wanted. I’d try. I should have read more in the books, but maybe he’d like showing me. I liked that thought.

“Here we are.” He turned to go in an open door and tugged me along with him.

The place was bigger than I’d thought from the outside, with long wooden tables running the length of the place and benches to match, a counter in the back with a list of ingredients posted on the wall, as well as the prices for the various sizes of pizzas and combinations, and ovens well behind the counter. I took a deep sniff, and my mouth started watering. Yes, this place made good pizza. I was sure of that.

“I vote for a large bacon and pineapple pizza. How about it?”

The good smells of browning dough and all kinds of toppings were making my stomach rumble. “I vote for a half bacon and pineapple, half hamburger and onion pizza. Large, of course.”

“I like a man who likes his pizza. Yeah, let’s do that. C’mon.” He tugged at my hand, which he was still holding. “Let’s order. Know what beer you’re going to pick?”

I hadn’t seen the beer list yet, but a quick check showed me that it was at the end of the pizza listings. I scanned it. “Harpoon, definitely. The IPA or the Ale, though, hard to choose between them.”

“I’d go for the India Pale Ale.”

“Nice to know you have good taste in beer.”

He let go of my hand and in the same motion slung his arm around my shoulders. “I have good taste in men too.”

I stiffened, then made myself relax. Jamie wasn’t stupid. If he felt it was safe to put his arm around me here, it probably was.

“Sorry,” he said softly. “Didn’t think you’d...” He took his arm away and looked away from me. “Sorry.”

I hated how sad he sounded. “I’m new to this, Jamie.” I tried to speak softly too. “To being in public with a guy—a guy I like and—” I gulped “—I’m on a date with.” He turned back toward me, his eyes bright. “I’m sorry. Cut me some slack?”

“Yeah, David, as much as you need. Hey, does anyone call you Davy?”

His voice was happy again, and I was happy too. “Not since I was a kid.”

“Mind if I do?”

“No. Go ahead.” I liked him wanting to give me a nickname.

“We’ll be Davy and Jamie.” He headed for the counter to order, and I went with him. “Hey, they almost rhyme. Cool, huh?”

I laughed as we took our place at the end of the short line. “I like that.”

“Me too.” He grinned. “And I like you.”

I was looking into his happy green eyes, and all I wanted to do was be with him. “I like you too.”

The line moved, and we were up at the counter. We ordered the pizza and beer, which Jamie insisted on paying for.

“I asked you out. You can buy next time,” he said with a grin, and the woman taking the order beamed at us both. I knew I was turning red as I nodded agreement and put my wallet back in my pants pocket, but I’d survive.

He thought that this was a date, the same as I did, and he still was talking about a next time. Wow.

The pizza was really good, and we ate it all, with the beer to wash it down. I found out that he liked to watch sports, especially baseball and soccer, didn’t cook much, and read a lot of books.

“Anything that looks good when I’m shelving, I note where it is and pick it up later or read it on my breaks. It’s a good system, keeps me out of trouble.” He wiped his mouth with a napkin. “Not that I get into trouble much, really. I’m a boring guy.”

“No, you’re not.” There was no way I could believe that.

“Well, thanks.” He smiled—I really liked his smile—and shook his head. “Are you done?”

I laughed. “We ate all of it, so yeah.”

He laughed too. “Good point. But we could get some more beer if you wanted.”

“No, thanks.”

“The bar then?”

Right, he was going to take me to the gay bar. I’d been having such a good time with him I’d almost forgotten. I nodded.

He stood. “Let’s go. There should be some people there by now.”

We cleared the table and headed outside.

“Where’s the bar?”