

He pointed down the street. “There.”

It had a small sign, Peter’s Place. I’d have never known it was anything but a regular bar, but if Jamie said it was a gay bar, I believed him, and I’d go there, with him.

I swallowed. Why wasn’t this easier? “All right.”

Jamie reached out and took my hand. “We don’t have to do this tonight. The bar will be there whenever you feel like going.”

I’d resolved not to be a coward, and I was not going to back down now. “I want to go.”

“I remember the first gay bar I went to. God, was that a disaster.” I couldn’t imagine him as anything but gorgeous and confident, but I had to believe him, hearing the distant pain in his voice and feeling the tightness of his hold. “That’s why I wanted to take you—because it’s not easy walking into some place you’ve never been and only thought about going all by yourself. Plus, what I said before. Even more now.”

I couldn’t help smiling, remembering him declaring he wanted a chance with me. “Yeah, I like that reason.”

“We don’t have to stay long.” He had an eager look in his eyes.

“No, we don’t.” I squeezed his hand. “We don’t even have to have a drink.”

“No, if we go in we’ll have to have a drink or we’ll get thrown out.” He was grinning now. “C’mon. I’ll buy.”

“You bought dinner.” We were walking toward the bar, hand in hand, and I was happy.

“So? I want to. You can buy next time.”

Next time. I liked that thought a whole lot, but I wasn’t going to back down on this. “Come on. It’s my turn.”

“I like the thought of taking turns.” His voice was husky and low, and I swallowed. He wasn’t talking about buying drinks—he was talking about sex. “Sure. You buy.”

I swallowed again. God, my cock was hard. Why

the hell were we going somewhere public anyway?

We were at the wooden door. Next we'd go in.

I was very glad Jamie was there with me.

He blew out a breath and reached for the handle with his free hand and pulled the door open. "Ready or not, here we come."

We were both laughing at that when we walked into the bar.

It didn't look any different from any other bar I'd ever been in, with its plain wooden tables, plain wooden chairs, framed beer posters and memorabilia on the walls, and a dark polished wooden bar with a lot of taps for drafts. There were some men at the bar and others at the tables. The place was about half full. There weren't any women there, but that wasn't too unusual either.

A couple of men turned to look at us, and one called to Jamie to come over.

"Not tonight, Carl. Got a date." He looked so proud, and I couldn't help smiling. How had I gotten so lucky?

"Can't take any competition, huh?"

"Sure I can, but why should I?"

"C'mon over, sunshine."

He was talking to me?

"I'll tell you some stories about old Jamie there and show you a better time than he ever could." He patted the back of the chair next to him.

What was with this annoying man? I didn't even know him, and he was trying to ruin my evening. I wasn't going to let him do that.

"No, thanks." I looked away from the man, who was laughing, and at Jamie, who was definitely not laughing. He was giving the guy a hard stare. "Jamie." He blinked and looked at me. "Ignore him. I'm going to, since I'm with the best-looking guy here." I made sure to say that loud enough for this Carl to hear.

Jamie blinked again, then grinned. "You got that wrong. *I'm* with the best looking guy here."

He squeezed my hand, and I squeezed his. I wanted

to argue with that, since I knew I wasn't good-looking, but he sounded so happy and sure that I didn't. "Thanks."

"Sure. Sit down, and I'll get us some beers. 'Kay?"

Carl had stopped looking at us, and all the other men were minding their own business.

"I told you I was buying."

Jamie held out his hand. "So give me some money." I dug into my pocket for my wallet. "What kind do you want?"

"Just some soda." I didn't need any more to drink. I was with him, in a gay bar.

He blinked, then nodded. "Yeah, I don't need any more alcohol either." He grinned. "But it'll be pricey soda."

Why would I care about that? I handed him a ten and took his jacket from him. "I'll take a Coke, please."

"Coming up."

He headed toward the bar. I went to an empty table away from the other people, putting Jamie's jacket on the back of one chair and my bag on the floor by the one across from it, sat in the second chair, and took some deep breaths. Being in a gay bar with Jamie was heady stuff.

Jamie was already heading back to me, which made me smile. I wanted to be with him, not by myself. I was by myself too much of the time.

He set two glasses on the table, each with a straw topped with the end of the white wrapping. "Two pricey sodas, as you ordered. I'll give you the change later, if that's okay."

"Thanks. That's fine." I reached for one of the glasses and plucked off the wrapping, then raised my glass. "To us."

Jamie's smile was wide and happy. "Yeah, to us."

We both drank, then Jamie set his glass on the table. "Hey, about when we came in."

"Yes?" What was the problem?

"Sorry about that. I can be a dick sometimes."

Didn't mean to let you see it this soon, though."

I leaned toward him. I didn't know where this confidence was coming from, but hell, I'd take it. "Did you say I could see your dick?"

His eyes widened. "Now?" He reached down, with a mischievous look in his eyes. "Sure, but we'll get thrown out."

"Not now." We were both laughing. "God, I don't believe I said that."

"I love that you said that. And yeah, I'll show you my dick later, if you show me yours."

Oh yes. I nodded.

He put his hand on my arm. "Good."

We had to change the subject now, or I'd drag him out of there. I cleared my throat. "Do you like your job?"

He let go of my arm and leaned back in his chair. "Most days. Today a lot."

"Why today?"

He laughed softly. "Cause you walked in, David. I thought that would have been obvious."

I swallowed. "I'm not good at flirting, Jamie."

"I'm not flirting."

I believed him. "Okay. Thanks."

We were both quiet after that, but it was a good quiet. We sat and drank our Cokes and looked at each other. I liked it.

Jamie came back from the bathroom—I'd gone a few minutes before, courtesy of the beers with dinner—sat back down, drank the last of his Coke, and put down the glass. "That was good."

I finished the last of mine. "Yeah, it was."

"So, got any questions about those books?" He was smiling one of the warmest smiles I'd ever seen. "Anything at all?"

I smiled too. "Not really."

"They're good books."

"They seem to be." It took me a moment to get up

the courage to say what I wanted to. We were in a gay bar. We could talk about gay things there. “I do have a list I’d like you to look at, though. It’s my list of things I want to try.” And with him if at all possible, which I hoped he’d understand without me saying so. I dug the list out of my pocket and smoothed it out on the table, then handed it to him.

He scanned it, then looked at me. “I like your list.”

“We can’t do anything about it here, though,” I said softly, tapping into courage I hadn’t known I had. “But we could somewhere else. Like my place, or yours.” I hoped he’d want to take me to his place. He’d said earlier that he wanted me in his bed, and that sounded great to me.

“Oh yeah.” He had an intense look in his eyes. “At my place. I want you there.”

My heart was pounding. “I want to be there.” And I didn’t want to be at this bar any longer. I’d found who I wanted, and I wasn’t going to wait any longer to be alone with him. “Let’s go.”

He was up and out of his chair before I finished. “Yeah. Let’s go.” He grabbed his jacket.

I grabbed my bag and the list as I stood. “Is your place far from here?”

“A few T stops. Come on. I don’t want to wait.”

Neither did I. “Yes.”

He wasn’t smiling, but I liked the look on his face anyway. I’d put it there. Maybe that was why I liked it.

He took my hand when we were outside. “I’m glad you’re coming home with me, Davy.” His voice was low. “I really am.”

“I’m glad you want me to come home with you.”

He squeezed my hand. “I’m smarter than I look.”

I couldn’t help smiling at that as we started walking. “You look pretty smart.”

“Yeah?” He grinned at me. “That’s not what I hear.”

“Then what you hear is wrong.”

He laughed but didn’t say anything more.